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VICTOR HUGO

BY

RAYMOND ESCHOLIER

translated from
the original French edition
BY Lewis Galantiere

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VICTOR HUGO

Foreword

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His mother was a child of the wild Vendée; his father a Lorrainer of the country of Jeanne d'Arc. Born in Grenoble, he grew up in the fortresses and cantonments commanded by his father in France, in Corsica, and in Spain. A recognised poet at twenty, at thirty he was already the author of Hernani and the chief of the Romantic movement in France.

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FOREWORD

Specially written for the American edition by

RAYMOND ESCHOLIER

Not long ago the Swedish Minister to Mexico made a gift to his French colleague of a document of the greatest interest. This hitherto unpublished document, which is the letter that follows, and which I am happy to present to my American readers before its publication elsewhere, was written by Victor Hugo to the then American Minister to Belgium, Mr. Sandford, on the morrow of Lincoln's death. No finer message from France to America exists than this homage paid by the great exile to that martyr who died in so noble a cause.

"Hauteville House, 29th April 1865

"Dear Mr. Minister:

"Permit me to express to you the sorrow of an exile. The thunderclap at Washington has shaken the world. History tells of these darkenings of the sky: after the dawn comes the darkness. But the American people is a colossus of bronze: traitors may scratch its surface, but they cannot overthrow it. If liberty were to fall in America, humanity would perish. How frightful a cataclysm! Not the traitor who assassinated Lincoln is the true culprit, but he who directed the great slave-owning rebellion: it is this rebel who must be sought, the horrible rebel without that conscience which is the light of the soul. Let not the American people weep for Lincoln. This martyr has his place between John Brown and Jesus Christ as the third redeemer of humanity.

"A man came forth from the humblest rank of the nation. This Man of the People won, by his integrity, the Chief Magistracy of the greatest nation in the universe. With no other genius than a sense of duty that lighthouse guiding him in the

dark of the night, he fell on the very day of the immolation of his precursor, a victim of all his great deeds. Glory to the Man of the People! Lincoln's grave broadens the base of the immense pyramid of America's greatness. More than ever, your nation has become the guide among the nations, the star among the nations, the nation pointing out to its sister nations the granite way to Liberty and to universal Fraternity.

"To you, Sir, I present the wishes of an exile for the people which best welcomes exiles and opens its broad bosom to them.

"Liberty may crumble in Europe; these things have been known to happen; but its gleam shines over the new world of which I am, in my soul, a devoted citizen.

"Victor Hugo"

We are now engaged in re-shaping, re-classifying, and increasing the great collections housed in the Maison Victor Hugo, at 6, Place des Vosges, Paris. I have the honour to be the curator of this museum where the late Myron Herrick, long Ambassador from the United States to Paris, and one of the great friends of France, loved to come and meditate. When the Musée Victor Hugo reopens its doors early next year, I propose to exhibit in a single collection everything we possess which bears upon America. The letter on Lincoln's death is not an isolated phenomenon in the life and thought of Victor Hugo. We shall, for example, expose with pride, besides this letter here made public for the first time, an admirable portrait of the illustrious victim in the cause of anti-slavery, bearing this simple and eloquent inscription: *To Victor Hugo, Abraham Lincoln.* Portrait and letter will take their place beside the marvellous drawings inspired in Hugo by the torture of John Brown, the first martyr to Abolition. For many years this heroic gibbet continued to haunt the author of The Last Day of a Condemned Man. He, on the rock of Guernsey to which exile had chained him, had been one of the first to make the judges and hangmen of John Brown hearken to the great voice of humanity. The letter he wrote on the second of December 1859, the anniversary of the strangling of freedom by

Louis Bonaparte, prophesied, two years before the event, the secession of the American Union and the fratricidal war between North and South. It was a magnificent chant of love sung by the greatest of French poets to Washington's Republic:

"When we think of the United States of America, a majestic figure rises before our eyes—Washington. At this very moment, this is what is happening in Washington's fatherland: There are slaves in the Southern States, and the pure and logical conscience of the North is stirred to indignation by this monstrous absurdity. A white man, a free man, John Brown, has tried to liberate these negroes, these slaves. He tried to begin his work of salvation by delivering from bondage the slaves of Virginia. This religious, austere Puritan, filled with the spirit of the Gospels (Christus nos liberavit), sent forth a cry of freedom to these men, his brothers. Enervated by servitude, the slaves failed to respond, for slavery deafens the soul. Deserted, John Brown fought alone with a handful of men. He was riddled with bullets, and his two young sons fell dead like holy martyrs at his side. He was captured. This is what is known as the affair at Harper's Ferry. John Brown and four of his men—Stephens, Copp, Green, and Coplands—have been tried. What sort of trial were they given? Briefly, this is the answer:

"John Brown, lying on a pallet, with six unhealed wounds, one in the arm, one in the back, two in the chest, and two in the head, bleeding through his mattress, scarcely able to hear, the slaves of his two sons by his side; his four fellow prisoners wounded, dragging themselves about in pain, one of them, Stephens, with four sabre cuts; "Justice" in a great hurry, unable to await their recovery; a prosecutor, Hunter, in great haste, and a judge, Parker, agreeable to this haste; interrogatories cut short; postponement refused; false or mutilated evidence produced; witnesses for the defence pushed aside and the defence hampered; two guns charged with shot in the court room; orders for the gaolers to shoot the accused if any

attempt is made to free them by force; forty minutes of deliberation; and three death sentences pronounced. I affirm, on my word of honour, that this took place not in Turkey, but in America.

"Such things cannot be done with impunity in the face of the civilised world. The universal conscience is an open eye. Let them beware; let them know that they are watched, these judges at Charlestown, this Hunter and this Parker, this slave-owning jury, this population of Virginia. Some one is looking at them.

"Europe's eyes are fixed at this moment upon America.

"John Brown was pronounced guilty and sentenced to be hanged this very day of the second of December.

"News of a temporary reprieve has just reached us. He will die on the sixteenth.

"The interval is brief. Is there time still for a cry of mercy to make itself heard?

"Even if unheard, it is our duty to raise our voices.

"Perhaps a second reprieve will follow the first. America is a noble land. Human feelings are quickly stirred in a free country. We hope that Brown will be saved. What a terrible thing it would be if he were not saved, if he died on the scaffold on the sixteenth!

"Let us declare firmly—since kings are going and peoples coming, and we owe the truth to peoples—that Brown's executioner will not be Hunter, the prosecutor, nor Judge Parker, nor Governor Wyse, nor the little state of Virginia: we shudder to think and say it, but the executioner will be the whole of the great American republic.

"Before such a catastrophe, the more one loves this republic, the more one venerates it, the more one admires it—the more one feels one's heart sink. One single state should not have the power to dishonor all the others; and here Federal intervention is justified. If not, if the Federal Government refrains from preventing that which it can prevent, union becomes complicity. However great the indignation of the

generous Northern States, the Southern States have implicated them in the opprobrium of this murder. All of us, whoever we may be, those of us whose common country is the symbol of democracy, feel ourselves wounded and compromised by this sentence. The scaffold will arise on the sixteenth of December. Thereafter, in the light of incorruptible history, the august Union of the new world will add to its sacred solidarity one blood-stained solidarity, and the radiant sheaf of this splendid republic will be tied by the running noose of the gibbet of John Brown.

"This is a tie that kills.

"When we think what this Brown, this liberator, this soldier of Christ, attempted, and think that he is about to die strangled by the American republic, the deed assumes the dimensions of the nation which commits it. And when we reflect that this nation is a glory of human kind, that like France, like England, like Germany, it is one of the organs of civilization, that in certain sublime audacities of progress it has often surpassed Europe, that it is the summit of a whole world, that there shines on its brow the immense glow of liberty, we affirm that John Brown will not die, for we start back in horror before the notion that so great a crime may be committed by so great a people.

"Politically, the murder of Brown would be an irreparable mistake. It would introduce into the Union a latent fissure which would end by cracking it open. It is possible that John Brown's martyrdom might strengthen slavery in Virginia, but it is certain that it will shake the structure of American democracy. You save your shame, but you kill your glory.

"Morally, a part of the light of humanity seems to be eclipsed, the very notion of justice and of injustice is clouded on the day which sees Deliverance murdered by Liberty.

"As for me who am but an atom, and who yet, like all men, feel in me all the conscience of humanity, kneel in tears before the great starry banner of the new world, and in profound

and filial respect I beg with folded hands that the illustrious republic consider the fate of universal moral law, that it save John Brown, that it pull down the threatening scaffold of the sixteenth of December, and that it do not permit the original fratricide to be repeated before its eyes—and, I add with a shudder, almost by its fault.

"Let America realise and know that there is something worse than Cain killing Abel, which is Washington killing Spartacus.

"Victor Hugo
Hauteville House
2nd December 1859"

Two weeks after this great cry of mercy was wafted across the ocean, John Brown was, of course, hanged. Victor Hugo composed for him this epitaph: *Pro Christo, sicut Christus*, and he made three large drawings representing the sublime and sorrowful holocaust. One of them was engraved by Paul Chenay and bore this single word as a reminder of the sacrifice of the Man who was God: *Ecce*. Two of these drawings belong to the Municipality of Paris: one is in the Victor Hugo Museum on the Place des Vosges and the other is at Hauteville House, in Guernsey. The third of these masterly compositions is in the possession of the Hugo family.

In the wide and empty night the *Hanged Man* sways on his gibbet, lighted by a pale lunar gleam. His feet are tied. His hands are bound. He is a human derelict waving in the wind. How this poor mass of shadow and light is still able to move us Frenchmen who have long since forgotten the heroism of John Brown the Abolitionist, is the secret of genius, of the genius which triumphed as greatly in the three drawings devoted to John Brown as in the letter addressed to the American democracy on the second of December 1859.

This great friendship, attested seventy years ago by both Lincoln and Hugo, was ever remembered by the American people in their devotion to the proud and noble poet. Thus, at the beginning of the "Terrible Year," on the twelfth of March 1870, the *Courrier de l'Europe* reported:

"Last month, citizens of the United States met at the Langham Hotel to commemorate Washington's birthday. Among the numerous toasts proposed was the following: 'To Victor Hugo, friend of America and predestined regenerator of the Old World!'"

Colonel Berton, who presided at the banquet, was charged by those present with the transmission of this toast to the exile of Guernsey. In predicting the advent of the United States of Europe, which was preached by Napoleon long before it was advanced by Monsieur Briand, Victor Hugo replied:

"I am deeply touched by the noble toast which you have transmitted to me, and I thank you and your honourable friends. By the side of the United States of America we should have the United States of Europe: the two worlds should form one single Republic. The day will come and when it comes the peace of the peoples of the world will be founded upon the only solid base, which is the liberty of mankind."

Hugo was to repeat in even greater detail this anticipation, when, on the twentieth of September, 1872, he sent to the Peace Congress of Lugano his magnificent letter on the future of Europe:

"We shall have a European Republic.

"How will it come?

"By a war, if Germany forces one upon France. But this immense thing, the European Republic, is sure to come.

"We shall have the great United States of Europe, which will crown the old world as the United States of America crowns the new world."

For the foreign student of the French genius, there is no better master than Hugo, and I am happy to hear that he is widely studied in the alert and powerful universities of the United States. I have been told that some defence of this great poet might be relevant in this foreword, but I hesitate to believe that Victor Hugo's work does not suffice to defend him.

In France the detractors of romanticism have hauled down their flag. It is no longer possible to say of a century to which we owe Napoleon and Chateaubriand, Lamartine and Vigny, Delacroix, Berlioz, and Hugo, that it is "Stupid." Even Monsieur Léon Daudet, in his *Flambeaux*, surrenders and ranks Hugo among the greatest geniuses of the human race.

Monsieur Denis Saurat, Director of the *Institut Français* in London, who is now engaged upon a remarkable study of Victor Hugo's religious ideas, about which so little is known, wrote recently: "The reaction away from Victor Hugo is ended, and henceforth he who rejects Hugo's work in its entirety avows himself a truncated mind. . . . Raymond Escholier wrote of Hugo that he was 'the only great man whom France could set beside Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe!' This is now freely acknowledged. He does not mean that Hugo was flawless, nor even that he had not great defects; but Dante and Shakespeare and Goethe too had great defects. What it means is that the time has come when the defects in his work, great as they may be, no longer prevent us from delighting in his qualities, or from ranking him with the greatest. And in the first rank Hugo stands alone in France as does Shakespeare in England.

"Secondly, Hugo's thought. To this also Raymond Escholier is the first to do justice. 'A great thought, long ridiculed and misunderstood: too deep, too hidden, too bold,' not to have been misunderstood. Proust maintained that there was a gulf of half a century between a great man and his time. This half century has now run its course, and it is our duty to understand Hugo. Accusations of vagueness and silliness are no longer in order; indeed, they turn like boomerangs upon the accusers who have not read Hugo with precision or intelligence.

"Hugo is, in fact, a difficult writer. People who think they understand him off-hand condemn him. It is because they have really not understood him. He wrote eighty volumes and meditated intensely over a period of more than fifty years.

And how long has the reader taken to try to understand him? Like Blake in the eighteenth century, Hugo in the nineteenth century was one of the great Occult of humanity, one of those men who mine deep within themselves,

> Like one who, holding aloft a lamp, seeks
> Far from material things, far from the bright world. . .
> Deep in the desolation of the inner abyss.

"Reverse your apprehension of Victor Hugo. What you thought metaphors were ideas. Hugo does not deal in metaphors.

"Hugo's superficial erudition, his Moreri, his mediæval and Hindu trumpery, served to hide his real erudition. He knew the Jewish Cabala and the occult systems as did perhaps only three or four men of his century. More than that, he was a master of the things that are hidden, and his genius was able to add to our knowledge of hidden things. He knew them better than Balzac did, perhaps better than Goethe; but Goethe was afraid of them, and Hugo was not:

> To the monster, the prodigy, the problem,
> I shall appear a monster myself . . .
> And all the efforts of darkness
> Shall not avail against my plunge,
> Shall not unbend my back
> Nor pearl my brow with fear.

"What he wrote here was done. Study Hugo's thought and you will see that he was as resolute as St. Theresa, was stronger than Blake and braver than Goethe. It may be that 'hidden things' do not interest you, in which case you are ignorant of the meaning of poetry and merely like to play with words as children do with brightly coloured marbles. Poetry is the great religious effort of humanity.

"Raymond Escholier was the first to have the courage to say this in a popular book, and the first to devote four pages to Hugo's mysticism. We owe it to a too rational and even rationalistic misfortune that freedom's adherents in France

have shrunk intellectually by adopting a materialism which was already out of date when they took it on. Up to the time of Combes, the Left was idealistic. After the words and research of Boutroux, Bergson, Hamelin, and Henri Poincaré had definitely destroyed materialism, these left wing parties adopted it. This is why they never understood Hugo, and why men who in politics were enemies joined together, in the inept unanimity of politics, to declare that Hugo was stupid.

"But what do we care about politics? It is time to cease judging Hugo according to the fashion of the day. Nor should you believe that intellectual fashions have ever had much influence upon the real reputation of Hugo. As concerns the great majority of the French people, this reputation has never wavered. A few hundred intellectuals might repudiate Hugo, and published criticism might seem to have obliterated him; but this affected only a tiny minority. The public never even knew of Hugo's disfavour, and in foreign countries there has been no word about it. There is just time for our French intellectuals to step back into the ranks."

Denis Saurat's warning—and the warning of Maurice Barrès for whom Hugo was, according to the abbé Brémond, "one of his nourishing springs"—has been heard. Our intellectuals have stepped back into the ranks, and Victor Hugo's glory, far from dwindling, conquers more provinces every day.

FOREWORD

To the French edition

As a novelist respectful of life, I have not dreamed for one second of writing a novelised biography of Victor Hugo. The truth is that the existence of the only great man France can set beside Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe, is itself the most fabulous of novels. The story of Victor Hugo is a novel actually lived.

His existence is a living novel in which a psychological conflict takes place in the course of a life that resembles those popular heroic engravings of many years ago,[1] in which immense trials compromise the serenity of fame. It is the cruel and magnificent novel of a man and a poet (the two I found impossible to separate) whose thought was too profound, too deeply hidden, too bold, not to remain even yet misunderstood; although we may hope that it will soon be revealed to us. It is the novel of a formidable century dominated by two great popular figures: Napoleon and Victor Hugo.

I beg leave to assure the reader that no detail is here invented. Since this sort of biographical writing forbids my citing sources, I shall doubtless be accused by certain people, as soon as they open the book, of taking too great liberty with history. I cannot deny that this narrative of a great existence contains much hitherto unpublished material, and that this material has often led me to alter preconceived judgments and correct deep-seated errors concerning ideas and characters—errors for which an authority like Biré is quite as

[1] M. Escholier refers in his French text directly to the *imagerie d'Epinal.* Neither in England nor in America do we find any acceptable counterpart to these naïvely drawn and grossly coloured sheets in which are depicted the deeds of heroic and saintly figures. Cf. Duchartre's enchanting book, *l'Imagerie populaire en France* (Paris, 1926)—Translator's note.

responsible as the only slightly more fantastic anonymous author of *Victor Hugo raconté par un témoin de sa vie.* But is not this the first duty of the historian?

I owe these unpublished sources to Mme. Nègreponte (Mme. Jeanne Victor-Hugo); to the son of Georges Hugo, my dear friend Jean Hugo, who, with his aunt, was one of the inspirers of the splendid gift of Hauteville House to the city of Paris; to Mme. Ozenne and Mme. Montargis, who have piously preserved the rich archives of Paul Meurice; to the Marquis de Montferrier, who was good enough to allow me to examine the papers of his great-uncle, Abel Hugo; to M. Louis Barthou, who is too generous and too rich in Hugolian treasures not to share them with his friends, and whose admirably documented *les Amours d'un poète*, and *le Général Hugo*—the first faithful portrait of that "sweetly-smiling hero"—were of inestimable aid to me, and who moreover turned over to me that marvel—the still, and long to remain unpublished correspondence of Victor Hugo and Juliette Drouet; to M. Paul Bourget, who threw a new and very precious light upon the relations of Adèle Hugo with Sainte-Beuve; to M. Touzé, sub-prefect of Châteaubriant, a young scholar who was good enough to undertake an investigation of the stay of Sophie Trébuchet at Montagne-sur-Chère; to M. A. Gernoux, whose little known *la Mère de Victor Hugo* will change many readers' preconceived notions; to Mme. Juana Richard Lesclide, who has allowed me to read her unpublished work on the master whose secretary was Richard Lesclide; to M. Arthur Baleeine, of Jersey, so fertile in oral tradition; and to M. Denis Saurat, whose curious studies, published under the name of *Marsyas*, have opened to me new horizons on the interest of Victor Hugo in the Cabala, and whose masterly work, *l'Occultisme de Victor Hugo*, which he has allowed me to consult, will soon render justice to a great mind long ridiculed and misjudged.

My debt is undoubtedly equally great—and I regret not to be able to acknowledge it on every page—to one of the greatest

authorities on Hugo's work, the faithful biographer of Victor Hugo, the prodigiously informed editor of the *Légende des Siècles* in the *Collection des Grands Ecrivains*, M. Paul Berret. I owe great gratitude to Mme. Mary Duclaux, whose brilliant and (in the eyes of some) perhaps too humorous sketch should not make us forget the beautiful portrait of the master which she published in English with Constable in 1921, and which abounds in ingenious views; to Gustave Simon, whose *l'Enfance de Victor Hugo, la Vie d'une femme*, and *le Roman de Sainte-Beuve* stood me in such good stead; and in particular to M. Louis Guimbaud, who was the first to acquaint us, in *Victor Hugo et Juliette Drouet*, and *Victor Hugo et Madame Biard*, two definitive works which it will ever be necessary to consult, with the beautiful women who inspired Hugo's *Tristesse d'Olympio* and his *la Fête chez Thérèse*.

Raymond Escholier

PART ONE

THE TRIUMPH OF ROMANTICISM

The Meeting

"Save them! Save them, mademoiselle Sophie! The soldiers are on their way past Petit Auverné. We can't get word to the rector. And when they get there, they'll find our good priests in the grove, and Terrien, and Lion Heart, from Issé ——"

"And Pacory, the King-Hearted ——"

"And the Leopard, from Moisdon ——"

"And No-Beard, and the Nightingale, from St.-Mars-la-Jaille ——"

"And there's Le Maignan, and the Chevalier ——"

"What! The Lord of Heurtebise at Pont Averné? Stir about there, you lads," ordered the young horsewoman. "Do you hear the guns? They'll be at La Marre before you know it."

Two jumps carried Sophie's mare, Isabelle, out into the road. Not a single Chouan in sight. Fine-spun as amber, mysterious, reserved, close-mouthed, this girl from Nantes had all the stubbornness and fidelity of her Breton race. Her father, Jean-François Trébuchet, a sailor, a pilot, first lieutenant and then captain of his ship, a privateer and probably a slaver in his day, had bequeathed to her a taste for adventure. When this bold orphan, this twenty-year-old Amazon, was not at her aunt Robin's, at Châteaubriant (or Montagne-sur-Chère, as the Blues called it) she was on her way to Petit Auverné, to the family country-place, La Renaudière. There she would vanish deep into the primitive wood, lose herself on the little Wordsworthian island, and dream of war and love, surrounded by the memories of her childhood friend, Victor Fanneau de Lahorie.

The war, the war was all about her. The Chouan uprising, sly, treacherous, crafty, was everywhere. In the Auverné coun-

try every clump of broom, every by-path, was the hiding place of a rebel. It was an invisible war, "the tread of cats in the darkness, cat's tread in the underbrush, naked feet over the heather and the moss, soundless, wordless, breathless."

Sophie Trébuchet had many friends among the Chouans. She herself had something of the heart and the sense of a rebel. Her dreams were haunted by visions of women on horseback, —Mme. de Charette, Mme. de Bonchamps, Mme. de Larochejacquelin.

But now was not the time to dream. To-day she had to save a group of refractory priests and fanatical Chouans. Suddenly her mare reared back. Around a bend in the road, bayonets glittered. There were the soldiers.

"By God," growled a sergeant; "the brat's got nerve!"

"A little pockmarked for my taste. Too bad."

"Pretty puss, just the same. If all the fleas in my mattress looked like that ——"

The gallop of a horse sounded, and up rode their captain. He was young and strong, a thick-chested man of the people, high-coloured, red lipped, his eyes aflame. Sophie remembered him. She had seen him ride past her windows at Châteaubriant a few days earlier, chatting with General Muscars. Grave people, he and his chief, preaching moderation and the union of the French people. The captain signalled, and the troop halted, guns at right shoulder. The captain's black horse and the young Amazon's mare fraternized.

"Your name, citizen! Where do you live?"

"Sophie Trébuchet. I am spending a few days at La Renaudière, but I live with my aunt, Mme. Robin, in the rue du Couëre, at Châteaubriant."

"You mean at Montagne-sur-Chère. We were told of a group of rebels in the neighborhood of La Marre. Have you seen anybody?"

"Nobody."

"Have you your card of citizenship?"

"Yes, at La Renaudière."

Standing in his stirrups, the young leader looked long and carefully at Sophie.

"Sorry. I shall have to make sure of that. Lieut. Letort: to La Renaudière."

A whistle sounded, and to the great joy of the Chouans hidden in the hedge, the column turned face about. At its head rode Sophie and the captain.

"Yes, citizen, my family is indeed loyal. I am an orphan, but my grandfather Lenormand is judge of the revolutionary tribunal at Nantes. My aunt Françoise Robin, with whom I live at Montagne-sur-Chère, loves nothing more than Voltaire and the Republic, one and indivisible. Last year, it was my cousin, Sisie de la Chenelière, who played the part of the goddess Reason."

"*Tudieu,* citizen! Your guarantees are magnificent. But they make me marvel the more at your living alone in a country where so many sans-culottes have been killed by these rebels. Eluère, the justice of the peace at Issé, Martin, Ferrou, d'Erbray, the Ironmaster of Moisdon—the list is endless. Why, the other day some of my men who were peacefully picking cherries near Petit Auverné were murdered by Lion Heart's band!"

"I try to be kind to everybody, captain, and the Supreme Being watches over me."

An hour later, when the little troop, its thirst quenched and fatigue gone, collected to ride back to Châteaubriant, Captain Léopold-Sigisbert Hugo, known as Brutus, found it hard to take his leave. Sophie's citizenship card was in good and due form, of course; but a strange malady had invaded the honest Lorrainer's heart. The hour at the family home filled with trophies brought back by the old privateer, Trébuchet, from the shores of Asia and Africa; the moments in the library when Sophie had recited verses out of *Zaïre;* the charming stroll under the sentimental shade of the English garden, beside the girl, while they chatted of *la Nouvelle Héloïse* out of which each

could quote long passages by heart—all this opened new horizons to the hardened soldier.

"Don't stay on here. Go back to your aunt Robin. I hope to see you soon at Montagne-sur-Chère. *Au revoir!*"

"*Au revoir!*"

The rhythmic sound of the moving troop grew fainter. The girl stood in the garden path while the night came down. Then, from a holly-bush a voice arose, a voice as light as breath itself, a slight chirp of a voice:

"Thank you, Mademoiselle Sophie. Our good priests have got away. God will bless you for this."

But Sophie did not hear. She was dreaming of love.

On the Highest Peak

Floréal, the month of flowers, in the year IX. The ferns were blooming in the brakes. The morning dew gleamed on the hyacinths. Squirrels played in the branches. Grouse flew thick in the sky, and the throats of the bullfinches were opened wide, while the blackbirds whistled like fifes.

Major Léopold-Sigisbert Hugo had been informed of his impending transfer from Lunéville to serve as fourth battalion chief of the tenth demi-brigade at Besançon, and had decided to take several days of leave. He and Sophie had left their carriage and their children, Joseph-Abel and Eugène, in the care of Claudine, at Roan-sur-Plaine. He was showing his dear Sophie the country, "unique of its kind," which he had explored fifteen months before. It was a land of "aromatic valleys," of "delightful pasturages," of rocks and wild peaks, this mysterious Donon, where a good forest inn welcomed all travellers.

"Let us go to see Alsace, Sophie. Let us go to see Alsace and the sun."

The sun of *Floréal* could scarcely pierce the high undergrowth. Yet here and there in the gentle shadow of the mosses, under the trembling tips of the beeches, between the dark and

rigid pines, they saw it gleam and dance and vanish and reappear like the gilded hoofs of a faun.

Sophie had hearkened to the plea of a husband who had remained a lover. Tiny, fragile, her face slightly pocked, she was not really pretty; but she was something more than that.

Grandfather Lenormand had been obstinately opposed to the assiduous courtship of this "Brutus" met by chance at Châteaubriant. Sophie had a hard time to persuade him to give his consent. Finally, they were married by civil ceremony at Paris, where Léopold-Sigisbert was a member of the War Council, and where Sophie, accompanied by her brother Marie-Joseph, had bravely gone to meet him. They had quarters in the *Hôtel de Ville*, where she found a countryman in the person of Pierre Foucher, a clerk of court. This son of Nantes, won over by her example, also buried his celibate existence. On the evening of Foucher's wedding, Major Hugo, his groomsman, filled a glass, held it out to Foucher, and said: "You shall have a daughter and I a son, and we'll marry them off to one another. I drink to the health of that young pair."

Sophie, small and heroic as she was, had already given her husband two sons. Little Foucher, assuming she was ever born, would have two to choose from. Now Brutus wanted to cradle in his strong arms a little daughter, a replica of her tiny mother. He planned that Victor Lahorie, the adjutant-general, a friend of Sophie's since childhood and an old brother-in-arms of Léopold-Sigisbert's, should be godfather, and that the child should be called Victorine.

This warming thought rejoiced the major. His full lips grew greedy; a smile lit up his puckered eyes. In her thin, flowing dress, Sophie shivered. This goat-path was charming and solitary, but it was peopled with murmuring sounds: a spring babbled in the distance; a waterfall muttered among the mossy rocks; the trees were no more and had been replaced by arbutus vines, underbrush, the strange and perfumed flora of the highland pasturages, where the tinkling of sheep-bells is heard. Suddenly the travellers emerged upon the summit of the Donon.

The great wind of the peaks seized them, wrapped itself about them, shook them up and filled them with gaiety. Pink clouds floated in the green sky, and the young sun dazzled them. There, among the round and wooded mountains of the Vosges, lay the opulent plain of Alsace, offering itself up like a woman filled with desire. Nature swooned. In this nuptial magnificence, which fused things and beings upon these heights, Sophie had not the strength to resist the hand that lay upon her breast.

Twenty years later, on November 19, 1821, General Léopold-Sigisbert Hugo was to write to Victor-Marie, his third son: "You were conceived not on the Pinde, but on one of the highest peaks of the Vosges, in the course of a journey from Lunéville to Besançon. You seem to feel in you this almost aerial origin, and your muse soars in constant sublimity. . . ."

As the Seed at the Wind's Will

A room whose windows open out on the Place du Capitole. But who would think of opening them? Great flakes beat against the panes like moths that are drawn by the flame and die in it. Besançon was benumbed in its smock of frost and snow. It was the month of *Ventôse*, of the winds. A great fire of logs vivified the flowers in the hangings and lit up the two-leaved mirror which was to keep forever the memory of this birth.

Victorine was expected, but it was Victor who came. He was named for General Victor Fanneau de Lahorie, for whom Sophie clamoured in vain (the way from Paris to Besançon was long); but also was Victor-Marie named for Sophie's gracious gossip, who had not long before presented him at the town hall, Marie-Anne Dessirier, wife to another witness, Brigade Commander Jacques Delelée, *aide-de-camp* to General Moreau.

It seemed doubtful that Victor-Marie should live. He was so frail! No longer than a knife! said his pitying and desolate mother when she fixed her eyes on this colourless, blank-eyed,

soundless child. Léopold-Sigisbert tried to raise the head that bent at the neck like a reed, but Sophie took fright and protested. No, nothing could keep that head upright; it seemed bowed down by an oppressive weight. Good Mme. Delelée lay the infant out before wrapping him up. She lay his fragile body on the white warm wrappings; she held him up to the heat of the great fire; nothing warmed him. He cried not, nor wept, nor stirred. The doctor was right. No cradle was needed for this minute mummy.

The father shrugged his shoulders. Suddenly he went out of the room, for tears stood in his eyes, which poor Sophie must not see.

Mme. Delelée put the new-born child into a deep chair, where he seemed to disappear.

"How little he is," sighed Sophie. "That chair would hold a half dozen of him."

The children ran in to see their little brother for the first time. Abel, pink-cheeked as a girl, opened his blue eyes wide.

"He's ugly! He's ugly!" he cried.

Eugène, who was eighteen months old, broad in the shoulders and thick of wrist, waved an arm towards the chair and said in an indignant voice: "Oh, what a baby!"

Night came, white and freezing. Before she went away, Mme. Delelée brought the frail chrysalis to Sophie's side. Then, when she was finally alone, the mother leaned over her son. She caressed his inanimate mouth with the point of her breast. Marvel of marvels! mouth and breast clung together. The wind of *Ventôse* whipped the panes, the flame sang high in the crumbling logs; a breath of miracle filled the shadowy room, transporting the maternal heart which in its immense love had rejected the notion of impossibility. And while the new-born child drank his milk drop by drop the ecstatic mother repaid him for all that had been said of him, speaking to him in the way mothers speak: "You are beautiful; you will be big; you will be strong. You will live! You will live!"

Sophie Leaves Her Children

Major Hugo was a man of the people from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet. His father was a master carpenter of Nancy grown rich in the timber trade, and was himself the son of a farmer from Baudricourt, sprung from the sacred soil which had given birth to Joan the Maid and to Claude Lorrain. His ancestors had lived at Domvallier, in the Vosges, since the sixteenth century, and it is possible that a little blue blood ran with their peasant blood in his veins. After all, so long a rustic line is in itself a kind of nobility. This blood had coloured Major Hugo's cheeks, purpled his avid lips; it beat violently in his veins and urged him to bold, unreasoning, hardy, and generous deeds.

Léopold-Sigisbert was a good man and a brave one. He had fought against Charette in the lower Loire; wounded twice in the Vendée, he had been spared along the Danube in the course of the campaign of the year VIII, despite the unflagging energy which had won him the admiration of Moreau, the general in command. His heart led him, rather than his head. At La Chervolière and at Bouquenay, in the Chouan war, he had saved women, children, and old men from death at the hands of his own troops, even at the risk of his life. His enemies themselves were one day to attest his humanity. When his old brother-in-arms, General Lahorie, was made chief of staff to Moreau and invited Hugo to join him in the Army of the Rhine, his fate was decided. Despite their disgrace, despite the hatred with which the First Consul pursued them, he remained unalterably faithful to Moreau and Lahorie, and he refused to sign the outrageous accusation against Moreau which was sent to Bonaparte. There was still another charge against him. At Besançon the commanding officer of the twentieth demi-brigade sold outright the leaves of absence gratuitously accorded by decree. Major Hugo protested, and was in turn accused by Major Coppé. At Marseilles, where the

demi-brigade had been ordered six months after the birth of Victor-Marie, the affair reached its climax. The colonel in command was condemned, but he continued none the less to accuse Hugo, and there was a chance that his charges might be heard willingly in Paris. Léopold-Sigisbert decided to request a transfer.

How was that to be assured? The Fouchers were still in Paris. Pierre Foucher was still clerk to the War Council, and surrounded by influential friends. And there was Lahorie, whom the First Consul had refused to promote to division commander as Moreau recommended, but who was not without friends. Moreover, they might appeal to the master's brother, Joseph Bonaparte, who had known and gauged the worth of Major Hugo at Lunéville, during the negotiation of the Austrian peace. Joseph had already proposed the name of Léopold-Sigisbert for a brigadier's commission to the minister of war, "as a personal favour to Moreau and me."

Who was to go to Paris? Sophie, quick-witted and smooth of speech, gifted for intrigue, thought of going; but when she looked at her children, at Abel, Eugène, and little Victor who owed his life to her constant care, her heart failed her and her eyes filled with tears. Still, there was the report of the colonel, which weighed upon Hugo. He was accused in it of being a partisan of Moreau, factious, a conspirator.

In the end the wife won out against the mother. Sophie resigned herself to her duty and decided to leave. She would stop with the Fouchers in the rue du Cherche-Midi, at the hôtel de Toulouse. She would see Lahorie, and Joseph. On the 7th *Frimaire* in the year XI, the 28th of November 1802, in a flood of tears, she embraced her little children. In this bitter and gloomy season of the year, the road from Marseilles to Paris was very long. Léopold-Sigisbert, a warrior as sensitive as a hero of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, tucked her carefully into the post coach, covering her with blankets, woollens, and caresses, and stowing away the food for her journey. He held in his

arms his beloved, his wife, his friend, while she warned him against the seductions of the Mediterranean town. But he shook his head: "My Sophie, I shall keep my promise. The next time that you see your husband, the lover who adores you, his caresses will be as pure as your own, as frank, as tender." The driver's whip cracked, the wheels crunched, the horse-bells tinkled, and the heavy coach moved forward as the last good-byes were said and the handkerchiefs fluttered.

A few days later Major Hugo wrote to the traveller: "Your Abel, your Eugène, and your Victor continue to speak of you. I have never given them as many sweets as now, because like myself they have never before suffered so painful a privation. Victor is always calling for his mamma, and his poor mamma is deprived of the joy of hearing him. . . . Your Victor comes in, kisses me, I kiss him for you, and I make him kiss the place so that you may, at this distance, have something of him; and then I kiss the same place most ardently. I have just given him a bit of macaroon, of which I keep a supply in my drawer, and he has gone off munching it, with Nicolas. I could not hold back a falling tear when Claudine brought Victor in and he looked at your place and then let his eyes roam unhappily about the room. The dear child sought you everywhere, and neither the teasing of his brothers nor my own caresses could take his mind from you. . . ."

The Two Islands

Sophie's visit to Paris was prolonged beyond reason while Abel, Eugène, and Victor followed their father and the first battalion to Corsica and to the island of Elba. It was a beautiful voyage. Rising out of the deep blue water under the gilded sky, these islands of which history was to speak seemed to the Hugo children to be two immense mother-of-pearl shells, covered with alleys of eucalyptus and palm trees, groves of olive, cork-oak and strawberry-trees, and peopled with black

little Colombas playing with tiny stilettoes bearing the ominous devise, *nel cuore del nemico,* while the moonlight flooded the tall houses of Bastia where the bandits sat calmly drinking in taverns redolent of the heat and voluptuousness of the tropical thickets. Léopold-Sigisbert was very lonely in tragic and ardent Corsica. The sensitive, full-blooded warrior felt the need of reality. Despite the society which had collected at Bastia, despite the balls and celebrations which followed one another, Major Hugo could not forget, and he stretched forth his arms to the absent one.

"The children, how are the children doing?" was all that Sophie asked in her now rare letters. And most of all she asked about the littlest one.

Their good nurse answered: "I have engaged a woman for Victor. The first few days, the poor child couldn't abide her. He was sad, and he seemed to complain that he was sent out with a woman who could not speak our language. Now he is used to her. . . . I have worried a good deal about his teeth. Bring some vaccine when you come down. . . ."

Victor was seventeen months old, and his teeth came through with difficulty. Despite the care of Claudine, who had come away from Marseilles with them, Victor was weak. He had all the ills of infancy, and could not yet walk. But yet he was the best child in the world. "He can say his brothers' names, and his own name, and many other little words. He can take a few steps by himself, but too precipitately to be able to go on for long. He is always happy and I rarely hear him cry. He is the best possible child. His brothers love him very much."

This letter, dated the twenty-ninth of *Messidor* XI, the eighteenth of July 1803, was written from Porto Ferrajo in the island of Elba, where the twentieth demi-brigade was quartered. Mme. Hugo's delay in joining her husband and her children astonished the mess and gave it something to chatter about. ". . . Everybody is surprised at your not coming and at the presence of the children with me. People gossip about it, and I hear them, but I say nothing. . . ."

Such an appeal was not to be resisted, and this time Sophie left Paris, while Léopold-Sigisbert went part way to meet her. They met at Livorno, and then went on to Elba. But something had happened to alter Sophie's heart. The passion of the major encountered coolness and rebuffs. Mme. Hugo's love was concentrated upon her sons. "Sophie de Châteaubriant," as he used to call her in the time of the Chouan war, no longer loved her Brutus. She bore the children off to Paris like a she-wolf carrying away her young. Later, in her plea before the court at Thionville, she was to maintain that Léopold-Sigisbert had forced her to leave Elba on the pretext of an approaching siege by the English; but this was not true. The initial blame rests entirely upon her. Sophie's letters, after her departure from Porto Ferrajo, make no mention of the "Cécile Thomas woman" who, as a fact, was soon to fill her vacant place. But on the other hand, what could she reply to these lines, written by the major on the twenty-ninth *Prairial* XII: ". . . Your last departure hurt me so, was so against my wish, that I am still amazed, and am forced often, very often, to forgive you in my heart. . . ."

What powerful motive constrained Sophie to colour the truth? This long absence, this sudden coolness, this departure against the wish of her husband, are indeed perplexing circumstances. . . .

The Legs of Geneviève de Brabant

Moreau was a conspirator. The flat-haired Corsican had unmasked him. The victor of Hohenlinden was in flight. Victor Lahorie was exiled, although certain people said he was in hiding in Paris. Excepting only Joseph Bonaparte, Major Hugo was without patrons.

Despite her husband's pressing letters, Sophie had no thought of returning to the island of Elba. From her house at 24, rue de Clichy, where she was rearing her three children,

she wrote occasionally to Léopold about "little Victor's pranks." Little Victor was no longer the same; he was grown alert now, filled with life. Three years of his childhood were spent in the rue de Clichy, and when he grew to be a man he still retained, although incoherently, as we all do, certain memories of this house. The courtyard, where he played so much with Abel and Eugène, was always to haunt his memory. He was always to see the well in this little court, and the trough, and over it the willow tree.

When he was three years old his mother sent him to school in the rue du Mont-Blanc. He was so little that he was looked after more carefully than the other children. Mornings they took him into the room of Mlle. Rose, the schoolmaster's daughter. More often than not she was still abed, and he would sit down beside her. When she got up he would watch her draw on her stockings, and he never forgot Mlle. Rose's calves. All his life this lover of women adored beautiful legs and the precious curve of the calf.

What was taught him in school was never so hard as to make him dizzy. He spent a good deal of time looking out of the window at the men who were building an *hôtel* for cardinal Fesch. One day the pulley was hauling up a great stone, and on it a workman. The rope broke, and the workman was crushed by the stone. Another time, he was in school when a violent rainstorm turned the rue de Clichy and the rue Saint-Lazare into rivers. The poor child was not called for until nine in the evening. What he remembered best was a play given on the schoolmaster's birthday. A curtain divided the classroom into two parts. The play was *Geneviève de Brabant*, and Mlle. Rose played Geneviève. Victor, as the smallest of the pupils, played the child, and was dressed in tights with a sheepskin from which hung an iron claw. The play, of which he understood not a word, seemed to him interminable. In his boredom he dug the claw into Mlle. Rose's calf, and the spectators were amazed, in the midst of a most pathetic

speech, to hear Geneviève de Brabant call out to her child: "Will you stop that, you little scamp!"

The Nuts

October, 1807. Léopold-Sigisbert is now colonel of the Royal Corsicans. Called by Joseph Bonaparte to Naples, he was one of those who made life a burden to Fra Diavolo. Thanks to him and to Forestier, the famous rebel was finally captured. Colonel Hugo was made governor of the province of Avellino, and undertook to re-establish order there. In the midst of his triumph this kind father was thinking of his sons. It was three years since he had embraced them. Why not, now that he could breathe more freely and fortune smiled upon him, send for his little family? The little family left forever the house in the rue de Clichy, the courtyard, the well, the trough, and the willow tree. Victor bade farewell to Mlle. Rose, and the marvellous voyage began.

Rain whipped the windows of the coach. The roads turned and turned for hundreds of leagues. Finally they reached Mt. Cenis, all white with snow. Abel and Eugène were set upon mules, while Victor and his mother got into a sleigh. What an unforgettable plaything that sleigh was! They passed the grey roofs of Susa and breathed in the brilliant air of the Apennines. There was nothing like it to make one hungry. But no food nor any inn. A goatherd offered to shelter them in his cabin, where they found nothing but an eagle he had just killed. "Let us eat the eagle!" cried the children. The goatherd roasted its legs, which they devoured.

Parma was inundated. Storm hung about the peak of Aquapendente. They saw the flickering silver of the Adriatic. Along the road, men's bodies hung in the trees. These were brigands, so displayed to intimidate the others. They frightened Victor. But what scared him more was the fear of toppling over, like that cardinal they had just seen waving furious

arms out of the windows of an overturned carriage. The fleas which the children disregarded made it impossible for Mme. Hugo to sleep. They reached Florence, with its massive palaces, the bridge of Sant' Angelo, the statues of Bernini. It was a day of celebration, and the crowds had gathered to kiss the big toe of the statue of St. Peter. The three brothers kissed it too. Naples, radiant in the sun, seemed to them to be wearing a white robe edged with blue.

Finally they came to Avellino in the mountains. There stood its ancient palace, with flowers growing in the long cracks in its walls and lizards running across its marble floors. How good it was to live in the Neapolitan *far niente!* Best of all was to gather nuts, the celebrated *avelinos* of Avellino, the biggest nuts they had ever seen. To get to them you had to cross a deep ravine, walk along the edge of precipitous cliffs, and hang over a profound abyss.

Himself conceived on a peak, Victor was already accustomed to high places, disdainful of precipices, and even attracted by an abyss. We shall find later a sort of echo of the distant days of Avellino in the favourite images of the great poet: "abyss," "gulf," "precipice," "mouth of shadow."

This happiness was brief. Joseph Bonaparte was made king of Spain, and Colonel Hugo was forced to follow him to his new kingdom. The children returned to Paris with their mother, and this time some attention was lent to their neglected education.

The Italian journey had not led to a reconciliation, for now another woman reigned over Léopold's heart. Nevertheless, he parted in sadness from his children. The conqueror of Fra Diavolo was never again to feel them climbing at his knees, opening wide eyes at the embroideries of his uniform, digging their little hands into his epaulettes. And while another post coach was carrying his wife and sons over the white roads of Italy to France, Léopold opened his heart in a letter to his dear mother who was living in Burgundy:

"Abel is an extremely likable child. He is big, polite, more than usually poised for his age. His progress is encouraging, and I know that he, like his brothers, will have an excellent career. Eugène is the one who was put in your care when he came into the world. He has the most beautiful face in the world and is as lively as gunpowder. I believe he is less apt for study than his brothers, but he has no bad qualities. Victor, the youngest, shows a great aptitude for study. He is as well poised as his eldest brother, and very thoughtful. He speaks little, and never except to the point. I have been struck several times by his remarks. His face is very kind and sweet. . . ."

This sweet, grave child of the century was making his acquaintance with glory. While the coach rolled along to Paris, trophies of banners haunted his dreams and trumpet sounds awoke him. Already the Napoleonic epos was chanting in him:

Parmi les chars poudreux, les armes éclatantes,
Une muse des camps m'emporta sous les tentes,
Je dormis sur l'affût des canons meurtriers. . . .

Blindfold

Hidden away in the shadow of the old Saint-Jacques quarter of Paris, at number 12 of the Impasse des Feuillantines, stood a grilled gate. Beyond it lay an open courtyard on to which gave two doors, one to the right leading into the children's rainy-day playroom, the other to the left, at the head of a few steps, opening into the living quarters. There were four rooms: one in which Eugène and Victor slept (Abel being a board pupil at the *lycée*), another that was Madame Hugo's room, a third the dining room, and a fourth the guest room. A second stoop led from the living room on the other side of the house into that garden which Victor was later to describe in his verse as "large, deep, mysterious, its high walls shutting out the glances of the curious."

Beneath the windows bloomed the flowers Madame Hugo

loved, bordered on the left by an ill-kept plot of ground. It was from this tangle that Victor spied upon the "cess-pool" to watch the "deaf mute" emerge. The author of *les Misérables* was to remember this deaf figure, this "fabulous monster with a belly covered with scales and a back grown with warts, who was not a frog and not a lizard, yet lived in the holes of abandoned lime kilns and in dried cess-pools, black, hairy, viscuous, creeping, now swift, now slow, who never cried out but stared in a manner more terrifying than anything anyone had ever seen!"

Along the walls, and here and there between the worm-eaten, drooping stakes, were niches in which statuettes of our Lady had once been placed, and fragments of the Cross, and occasionally this inscription: *Government Property.* At the end of the garden three great trees hid an old, half-ruined chapel. The children had been forbidden to go there, but Victor had inherited his parents' taste for adventure, and he would slip furtively down as far as the wild thicket. Nothing moved there but the wind, nothing spoke but the nests, nothing lived but the trees. He would gaze with beating heart at "the old chapel through whose broken windows could be seen seashells curiously set into the wall." Birds flew into and out of the windows, being at home there: God and the birds lived easily together.

There were many fruit trees in the garden, but the stern mother forbade them to pick the fruit.

"What about those that fall?" asked Victor.

"Leave them lying on the ground."

"And those that rot?"

"Let them rot."

And so the fruits were not gathered, but allowed to rot.

The proprietor, old Lalande, the astronomer, was more liberal. He told the children that they might climb his trellises, and they did it to the point of coming home as drunk as throstles. And then there were the flowers; not those grow-

ing in the flowerbeds, which were not to be picked, but those in the thicket—wildflowers, violets, hyacinths, lillies of the valley, and the buttercups which Victor adored. When, in the evening, tired through with their running in the sun, chasing insects and butterflies, they came in with their clothes in tatters, the two boys were often roundly scolded by their mother. On Sundays Abel was home from school, and then all three raced in the garden. But their joy was never complete unless Madame Foucher brought her children there.

The toast proposed at the *Hôtel de Ville* might easily come true. After the birth of two sons, the first of whom died early, the clerk to the War Council was now the father of a daughter, and since Colonel Hugo had three boys, there was every chance that she might find a husband among them. On summer afternoons Madame Foucher often brought her son Victor and her daughter Adèle to the Impasse des Feuillantines. All the children would fly high in the air on the swing that had been set up, and when it was Victor Hugo's turn, it was the devil's own job to get him to come down. Standing up on the seat, his vanity would prompt him to swing himself as high as possible, until he disappeared into the foliage of the tree. But from time to time he would give up his place to the little Foucher girl who, honoured and trembling, would be hoisted to the seat and would beg them to swing her less high than before.

At other times they would blindfold Adèle's eyes and roll her about in a broken-down old wheelbarrow, stopping now and then to ask her to guess in what part of the garden they were. When she made a mistake a tempest of laughter would arise and descend upon her confusion. Thereafter she would lift the blind when they were not looking and give the right answer. But as soon as they saw that she was cheating, they would grow angry and take their revenge. Everything had to be done over from the beginning. The kerchief was tightened until it cut into her flesh, and the barrow was wheeled far from where they had started.

"Where are you?" they would ask sternly.

And again she would not know. She never knew, and they would laugh until they had laughed themselves into a mood of generosity, and she would be permitted to go the rest of the day without the kerchief over her eyes.

A Country Cousin

The colonel's wife had little time to give to the education of her children, for she was busy with many mysterious tasks, many subterranean intrigues. It was a fortunate thing that close by in the rue Saint-Jacques lived a decent fellow and his wife who taught reading and writing and arithmetic to the workingmen's children of the quarter. This good man, called Larivière, was in reality Father de La Rivière, a former Oratorian priest who, under the Revolution, had been forced to marry his housekeeper in order to preserve his life. Sophie had already met him at Châteaubriant.

There was no need to teach Victor to read. He had already taught himself, merely by looking at the shapes of the letters. And it took him no time at all to learn to write and spell, so that very soon in honour of the Hugo boys, the ex-Oratorian was brushing up his half-forgotten Latin and Greek. The poet later remembered his first master with affection, "*naïf* as a scholar and mischievous as a child." Forty-three years later, at the most perilous moment of his life, when he had to fly Paris under an assumed name, he took for a moment the name of Father Larivière.

On their way home from school Eugène and Victor would pass groups of children playing in their street. Their fathers were workmen in the great cotton mills that stood near by, across from the home for the deaf and the dumb. How they longed to play with these gay lads! But their mother had forbidden it, and little Victor turned his head the other way. In the distance they could hear the nostalgic cry of the broom-

woman selling her wares: "Brooms! Who will buy my brooms? Who will buy my pots?"

One day in the year 1809 Eugène and Victor were called into the living room and introduced by their mother to a medium-sized man, pockmarked (as Sophie herself was), with black hair and sideburns, and a kindly, benevolent face. He was a relative, their mother told them. This relative dined with them that evening, and was back again next day and the following days. They became rapidly acquainted with him, and in less than twenty-four hours they were old friends. Their mother warned them to say nothing about him, and the children observed this caution religiously. To the proprietor and the servants the unknown gentleman was a country cousin, an eccentric, a sort of bear come to Paris in order to meet nobody.

The bear ate at table with them, strolled in the garden, worked now and then beside the gardener, much as Jean Valjean was later to do in the convent at Picpus beside Father Fauchelevent. He supplemented the lessons given them by Father Larivière with others of his own. He had a fashion of picking Victor up in his arms which made the child laugh and fear him at once: he would raise him high in the air and then all but let him fall to the ground. The children did not know his name. Their mother called him "General" and Victor called him "Godfather."

He was lodged in the ruin at the far end of the garden, heedless of the rain and of the snow which came blowing in through the windowless frames in winter. The chapel was his bivouac. Behind the altar he had a camp cot, and beside it his pistols and a copy of Tacitus which he made Victor study with him, and which Victor preserved long afterwards.

"Child," he would say, speaking of the Roman Republic, "child, liberty is the greatest thing."

For nearly two years he lived this secret, happy life with Sophie and her children. But one day, as they were finishing

lunch, the cook appeared in fright. She had seen several suspicious-looking men come into the courtyard. Some one rang. The unknown rose up from table and went to the door.

"General Lahorie?" asked one of the men.

"Yes."

"I arrest you."

He was scarcely given time to say good-bye to Madame Hugo before he was dragged away to prison.

"Let Us Watch Over the Empire"

Eighteen hundred eleven. Paris rings loud with gay sounds. The trees are pink. The constellations overhead disappear in the flares of Paris, lighted up to celebrate the birth of the King of Rome. The glow of Napoleon fills the sky.

The Panthéon was not far from the Hugo home, and the Emperor was going to the Panthéon. While factious generals conspired in the shadow of the garden Victor had little trouble to elude the vigilance of his mother. He stole quietly away in the direction of the temple of fame to see the hero whose Olympian calm was to subjugate him for life. "To see," he says in one of his poems, "that solemn and illustrious face, I slipped from beneath the maternal wing, for already my restless spirit was filled with him. . . . And what struck me in my sacred terror when the emperor appeared at the head of the procession, was not the sight of this noisy crowd that followed him . . . singing in chorus, 'Let us watch over the salvation of the Empire'; . . . it was the sight, among these fanfares of glory, of this sovereign man, moving mute and grave, with the air of a god of bronze."

Kiss Me

Léopold-Sigisbert Hugo had followed his patron, Joseph Bonaparte, into Spain. First colonel and then general, he was now, thanks to the favour of the new king, count and mar-

shal of the palace, governor of Avila and of Segovia, commandant of the province of Guadalajara and the royal domain of Molina in Aragon. Loaded with honours and prebends, the soldier of fortune seemed about to come into his fortune.

His brother, Colonel Louis Hugo, came to Paris in October of 1810 in the company of the monk, Concha, and insisted that Sophie and her children go to Spain. Sophie hesitated a long time. She had been told that Léopold had taken Cécile Thomas, disguised as a man, with him from Naples to Spain. She had heard that this adventuress, under the name of the Countess de Salcano, was living with the governor at Avila, giving orders in his palace exactly as if she had been his lawful wife. Such shameless conduct aroused all Sophie's ire. Nevertheless in the spring of 1811, minded of the future of her sons, she resigned herself to the perilous journey. Abel, Eugène, and Victor began courageously to study Spanish, and on the day when the heavy stage rolled out upon the high road to Bordeaux the children bade good-bye to Paris in Castilian. That night they slept at Blois, and the next night at Poitiers. At Angoulême Victor became interested in the ancient towers. His feeling for architecture was already so keen that these towers were always thereafter to remain in his memory so precisely that he could draw them, although he never saw them again. The crossing of the Dordogne at night on a ferry boat frightened the horses and did little to reassure Victor. At Bordeaux two beautiful girls dressed in red served them giant sardines, little rolls that were better than *brioches*, and lamb's butter. Then came Bayonne, with the bridge over the Adour, the castle-fortress, the cathedral of Sainte-Marie, and the cloister with its gleaming arcades.

The Hugo family had plenty of time in which to grow acquainted with Bayonne. The convoy they were to join was due a whole month after their arrival. They could wait without tears, for the house Madame Hugo had taken was so jolly. By way of killing time, she agreed to take a box at the theatre

for the length of their stay, and the children were overjoyed. They who had hitherto seen only *la Comtesse d'Escarbagnas* now saw Pixérécourt's immensely popular melodrama, *les Ruines de Babylone.* One did not admit that one had not seen *les Ruines de Babylone;* it was magnificent—at least it was so at Bayonne. Knights in apricot armour and Arabs clothed from head to foot in cloth of iron sprang up at every moment and then were drowned in waves of terrible prose amidst pasteboard ruins filled with trap-doors and secret passages, while Haroun the Khalif and Giafar his eunuch strode about. Abel, Eugène and Victor stared with open-mouthed admiration.

Alas, the *Ruines de Babylone* was too popular! It was played night after night, and would be played throughout the whole month. On the seventh day the exasperated children prevailed upon their mother not to take them to the theatre.

Fortunately, there were the birds, the greenfinches and goldfinches to be bought from the Basque children; there were boats on the Adour; and there was the top of the ramparts, where great battles could be fought. And when, as occasionally happened, the sky was overcast and the rain fell, and one was forced to stay indoors, Victor would take his box of water-colours, open the book which he and his brothers admired above all books, the *Arabian Nights,* which had been given him by General Lahorie, and illuminate its handsome engravings with lively colours.

But his greatest joy was this: The owner of the house was a widow with a daughter of fifteen. Victor was nine years old. The girl was blonde and slim, her skin was as delicately white as a camellia, smooth and transparent. She had a little hand, and her elbow was slightly reddened. A tea-coloured madras edged with green was knotted tightly around her *chignon.* When there was firing-practice Abel and Eugène always went off to see the manœuvres from the top of the ramparts; but Victor much preferred to stay at home with the girl. She

would say to him, "Come along: I'll read you something." Down in the courtyard there were three steps leading up to a door. It was on these steps that she would sit while he stood behind her, leaning against the door. Above them was spread the brilliant blue sky out of which the great sun sent its light into the lindens, changing the green of their leaves to gold. Victor knew nothing of the meaning of her words: he was listening to the sound of her voice. While she read, he had leisure to examine her. At times his glance would fall upon the slightly yawning *fichu* under his eyes and he would peer, fascinated and perturbed, at the rounded curve of her white skin, rising and falling softly in the shade, palely gilded by a warm ray of the sun. When she moved her head towards him, he would become of a sudden confused, and when she raised her great blue eyes and said, "Why, Victor, you're not listening!" he would stand transfixed. Then she would make him sit beside her, and, looking at him closely, she would say, "Kiss me, now."

A Name on the Road

Two thousand men guarded the convoy. Madame Hugo's carriage followed behind the treasure, the twelve millions of gold which the Emperor sent quarterly to Joseph, the treasure so dearly coveted by the guerilla bands. Three hundred carts followed interminably behind in single file, some drawn by four and others by six intractable, unreasonable mules. Sun, dust, and tinkling bells. Sophie was irritated, and the children were delighted.

The immense rococo coach which Sophie had engaged at Bayonne held, besides herself and the children, their luggage, provisions, a cask of wine, preserves, a quarter of beef, a whole sheep, eighty pounds of bread, a keg of brandy, and an iron bed with mattress (for Sophie was suspicious of Spanish beds). And with them, after they left Irun on the border, drove the

Marquis du Saillant, a nephew of Mirabeau and aide-de-camp to General Hugo.

The Basque country enchanted the travellers. It was so picturesque, so bright, so clean; its houses with their sloping roofs and covered balconies and ancient façades were freshly whitened every year; its churches had great balconies inside; its people were grave and mysterious and proud in their fine linen. The Basque women wash and wash this linen all the time, so that their meadows are perpetually covered with gleaming cloths which adorn the countryside before adorning its inhabitants. The convoy climbed and climbed; the mules strained and complained. There on the right shone a brilliant point like a huge jewel.

"What is that? What is that jewel?" Victor asked.

The Marquis du Saillant leant out and looked. "That jewel," he said, "is the Gulf of Fuentarrabia."

Myrtles, rhododendrons, junipers—an aromatic vegetation accompanied the convoy, intoxicating the children and the young women—those young women courted by the young officers at the windows of their carriages. Many a promise was made for whose fulfillment there was time enough. They were to have three months of this, three months of life on the road together before reaching Madrid.

They stopped that first night in a strange little mountain town where the little Hugos spelled out on a wall *Calle Mayor* —in France, *la Grand' Rue;* in England, the High street; in America, Main Street. Abel, Eugène, and Victor stretched their legs in this wide, handsome street, peering into its shop-windows while the setting sun purpled the houses. The road was paved with a sort of pointed, gleaming stone, so that they seemed to be walking on flakes of gold. Beneath the ancient wrought-iron balconies even the humblest house fronts bore enormous escutcheons, for here the poorest were the noblest and even misery was great and proud. The old ramparts had been built by the Saracens; the church was part fortress, and

iron balconies hung round its towers. The last rays of the sun stained the high-hearted town where doors and shutters were closed against the conqueror. On the outskirts, the smoke from the bivouacs attacked the houses. In the distance you could hear the mule-drivers singing in the voices of muezzins the nasal plaints of the Orient to the accompaniment of tinkling guitars.

Dreamy-eyed, the Hugo children came down the *Calle Mayor* to the high house with the armorial bearings where their mother sat impatiently waiting for them.

"What is the name of this town?" Victor asked.

Ever obliging, Captain the Marquis du Saillant stopped his orderly, who was brushing his clothes.

"This town," he said, "is called Hernani."

An Amber Necklace, a Rosebush

Valladolid, Segovia, Madrid. . . . General Hugo was not at Madrid; he was overdue. The Empecinado—and Madame de Salcano—took all his attention. Masserano Palace: a series of luxurious apartments, its staircases guarded by stone lions, built about dark, damp patios. Fortunately there was a portrait gallery. Victor loved that gallery, and went often to sit there in a corner by himself and gaze in silence at all these dead in whom dead centuries were born again. Fortunately, too, General Lucotte's children were about, and with them Pepita, the daughter of the Marquis de Monte-Hermosa. Pepita was sixteen; Victor was still not ten; yet the slight favours granted him were sufficient to arouse the jealousy of a certain captain. What a shrewd girl was Pepita! "I was eight," says Victor's poem, "and she twice my age. She would call me her husband and fill me with agitation. Oh, flowering branches of May! She was in love with a captain. . . ."

Victor was never to forget Pepita's chamber: "I palpitated in her chamber like a nest in the sight of a falcon. She wore

an amber necklace, and there was a rose-tree on her balcony. . . ."

At Don Basilio's

General Hugo, who was always on the road, turned up rarely in Madrid. His eldest son, Abel, was to be page to King Joseph. The younger boys, it was decided, would have to give up their wanderings through the Masserano Palace and return to their studies. They entered the College of Nobles as board pupils. After Father Larivière, here was don Basilio—eagle-beaked, deep-set eyes, a statue of yellowed ivory; and with him don Manuel, big-bellied and bloated with easy living. Every morning, in the dormitory, they were awakened by Corcovita, "Little Hump," who would later be called Triboulet and Quasimodo. Despite the neglect of their education, Eugène and Victor far out-distanced the little Spanish noblemen of their age. At nine and eleven years of age they explained Tacitus so well that their masters were forced to put them in the class with the older boys. The poor children found in this nothing to be thankful for. In Lahorie's copy of Tacitus, along with the names of Eugenio de Hugo and Bittore de Hugo, was written the name of their tormentor, a great, fifteen year old Biscayan called Elespuru, who pulled their hair, scratched their skin, and bit and beat them. Victor remembered him sixteen years later and took his revenge of the school bully by lending the Basque's name to one of the jesters in *Cromwell.*

The two boys were surrounded by hatred. However much the parents of the schoolboys might pretend loyalty to King Joseph, their sons were at no pains to hide their feelings about the foreigner, the invader, the usurper; and while they waited to grow up in order to be able to join the *guerilleros,* these diabolical lads made Victor and Eugène their victims under the crafty eye of don Basilio. Frasco, Count de Belverana, was five years older than Eugène. Nevertheless, the little French-

man and the big Spaniard fought it out. For want of a knife Frasco had armed himself with a pair of scissors, which he plunged into Eugène's cheek. Victor was less forgiving than his brother: five years later Frasco became the odious Gubetta of *Lucrèce Borgia.*

Thus, day after day, stern childish battles took place in the dark courtyards of the school in honour of him whom the Castilians called *Napoladron,* Napoleon the thief.

"They Read No More"

Once more they were back in the tranquillity of the Impasse des Feuillantines, but without Abel, who was now a sub-lieutenant and a cadet at Pau. They had been forced to fly the Spanish conflagration. Besides, Madame Hugo had her reasons for returning to Paris at the beginning of 1812.

The dear little garden seemed to the two boys grown much smaller. It took no time at all now to reach the thicket, and go from it to the far end of the wild-grown park where stood the now empty chapel in ruins. The College of Nobles was quickly forgotten. Eugène and Victor might work now or not, at their pleasure; but yet they often abandoned the garden for their books. Madame Hugo, who was very sentimental and loved to read, had let her ground floor and mezzanine to a bookseller named Royol who filled these stories with his books. Since Sophie did not enjoy dull books, she had her children read them all first, and tell her afterwards. All, that is, except those locked up on the mezzanine, where Royol stored those works which were either bold in philosophy or libertine in content. Sophie insisted that her sons be given the keys to the mezzanine, and there they discovered Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot; *Faublas* and other novels of the same type; but what they loved best was *The Voyages of Captain Cook*, the great success of the year, and the old Bible found in the house, the book at which all romantics quench their thirst.

"They Read No More"

The headmaster of the *Collège Napoléon* was doubtful of the good effect of so strange an upbringing upon Eugène and Victor. He did his best to point out its dangers to Madame Hugo, but the boys had been pupils at the College of Nobles, and they were eternally disgusted with the idea of boarding school. Victor could not forgive the pedagogue his interference, and the general's wife refused to listen to him: her sons were to remain free, and they were to have no other masters than the old garden and old Royol's books. But at twelve and at ten, one cannot spend all one's time reading. It is just as necessary to play as to read; and they hunted out and found the swing and the wheelbarrow.

They had made a new friend in Edouard Delon, the son of an exuberant woman from Marseilles and a member of the War Council. With the aid of this older but childishly gay boy, who was in the *Ecole Polytechnique* and could come to them only on Thursdays and Sundays, this life-of-the-party who led Victor Foucher along perilous house-gutters and down to the bottom of wells, games took on a new thrill; never had the swing flown so high into the trees, never had the rabbit hutch been so vigorously assaulted.

Adèle Foucher had grown taller and more beautiful. With those long eyes, that long hair, her dark golden skin, her pink cheeks and red lips, she was so like Pepita! So much like her indeed that one day, in order to tell the dawning of their love, Victor was to give her the name Pepita:

"Our mothers told us to run away and play, so we came out to stroll. They told us to play together, and we, children of the same age but not the same sex, talked together. And yet it is only one year since we ran and wrestled together, and I fought with Pepita for the most beautiful apple on the tree, and beat her for a bird's nest. She wept, and I said 'Good!' and we both ran back to complain to our mothers who said aloud that we were wrong and to themselves that we were right.

"Now she has taken my arm, and I am proud and moved. We are walking slowly and speaking in low voices. She lets her handkerchief drop, and I pick it up for her. Our hands tremble as they touch. She is talking to me about the little birds, and the star away off there, the vermilion sunset in the trees, her school friends, her frock, her ribbons.

"We spoke of innocent things, yet we blushed. The little girl has grown up.

"That evening—it was a summer evening—we stood under the chestnut tree at the end of the garden. After one of those long silences which often fell upon our walks, she dropped my arm suddenly and said, 'Let's run!' And she started on ahead of me with her waist as fine as the waist of a bee and her little feet lifting her skirt half way to her knee. She fled and I followed. As we ran the wind raised her cape from time to time and I could see her cool, dark back.

"I was beside myself. I reached her near the ruined old well, put my arm about her waist as by right of conquest, and sat her down upon a bench on the grass. She did not resist: she was out of breath, and laughing. But I was serious, and I gazed at her dark eyes beneath her black lashes.

" 'Sit down,' she said. 'It is still daylight. Let us read something. Have you a book?'

"I had with me the second volume of Spallanzani's *Voyages*. I opened it at random, came nearer her, she rested her shoulder against my shoulder, and we began to read each for himself, under our breath, from the same page. Again and again she had to wait for me before turning the page. My mind worked more slowly than hers.

" 'Haven't you finished?' she would say to me when I had scarcely begun. Meanwhile our heads touched, our hair floated together, our breaths came closer gradually, our mouths suddenly.

"When we thought again of reading, the sky was starry.

" 'Oh, mamma, mamma,' she said when we came in; 'if you only knew how we ran!'

"I said nothing.

"'You haven't said a word,' my mother said; 'you seem sad.'

"Paradise was in my heart. I shall remember that evening all my life.

"All my life."

Conspirator's Fate

There were other things besides games and laughter in their garden: there was a wounded heart, the torn heart of a passionate woman dreaming of vengeance.

Sophie thought of the humiliation she had endured in Spain, of Léopold's coldness, of the insulting audacity of that adventuress, the Countess de Salcano: of course she did. But there was something else, too; a secret which this heroic and mysterious woman was to take with her to the grave.

The man upon whom she sought to be avenged was not Léopold-Sigisbert Hugo: it was Savary, Duke de Rovigo, minister of police, assassin of the Duke d'Enghien, the old companion in arms of Victor Lahorie, who had not hesitated to promise the general freedom in order to draw him into ambush. It was through him that the inhabitant of the ruined chapel was discovered, arrested, thrown into a cell in the dungeon of Vincennes, and then transferred to La Force. One year had gone by since then, but nothing had been able to still Sophie's resentment. Hers was the cold, Breton anger which betrayed itself not in words but in action. For this former Amazon of the Chouan country who had for one moment fallen in love with Brutus, the old abandoned garden was not a paradise, as it was for her children. It was part of her native forest where, behind the thick curtain of century-old trees, pitfalls were dug, traps were sprung, men hid in ambush with guns cocked. . . .

During the summer of 1812, while the Emperor and the

Grande Armée were marching into the heart of Russia, strange councils were held under the chestnut trees in the garden. Beside Sophie's slender form stood other forms, taller, more massive. And among those who crowded and whispered there was a priest with a strong Spanish accent. The wife of General Hugo was plotting. Mysteriously, her notes reached Lahorie. One of Sophie's relatives, Dubuisson, was director of the hospital where General Malet dragged at his chain. Sophie knew very well the name of the mysterious veiled woman who was the heart of the conspiracy.

October 23, 1812. One o'clock in the morning. Silence and slumber everywhere. Suddenly, eight hundred leagues away from Paris the earth shook: two hundred thousand kegs of powder set under the arches of the Kremlin blew up the palace of the Tsars. At that very moment Malet was preparing to blow up the Empire. . . .

In the night the drum beat a general alarm. By torchlight the Paris garrison heard the twofold story of the Emperor's death and the overthrow of the Imperial government. General Moreau, the Duke de Montmorency, and Count Alexis de Noailles are part of the provisional government. The Bourbons are on their way back. Meanwhile Lahorie, miraculously delivered, is marching through the rue de Jérusalem.

The general is about to carry out Sophie's most cherished dream. The minister of police is abed. They seize him and hoist him more dead than alive into a carriage and drive him to La Force. In the grip of two soldiers, Rovigo is the butt of the crowd. It is he who now will fill Lahorie's dark cell. All Paris chants derisively the downfall of Rovigo. As for Madame de Rovigo, surprised in bed and flown in her thinnest shift, the crowd remembers with pleasure that "in all this affair the person who showed herself at her best was certainly the wife of the minister of police."

Hours pass. Malet's imposture is unmasked, and he is arrested by Major Laborde. Lahorie, whose turn comes next, is

found comfortably installed in Rovigo's armchair. He receives Laborde and the police with the grace of a nobleman, and the same soldiers who freed him now take him back to prison. Four days later, on October 27, at seven o'clock in the morning, the trial opens in the court room of the War Council. General Dejean is president of the Court Martial, assisted by Captain Delon, father of the young Polytechnic student who was the friend of Eugène and Victor.

Madame Hugo had not been seen at Les Feuillantines since the twenty-third. She was living at the hôtel de Toulouse and beseeching the aid of Foucher, who still lived there in the rue du Cherche-Midi although he had since been made chief of the recruiting service. Foucher, who was a royalist at bottom, helped her in secret. Sophie implored the intervention of Delon, struggled to the last minute to defend Lahorie; but Delon was adamant. He would call for the death sentence for Lahorie, Malet, and Guidal, all three. Sophie vowed to hate him implacably all her life, and forbade her children ever again to see his son. During the entire trial Lahorie was careful to disguise Sophie's name: she became *Madame Hulot*.

October 29, 1812. Holding Victor by the hand, Sophie, all in black, walked past the church of St.-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas. An autumn rain was falling, cold and penetrating. A great white placard covered a column to the right of the church porch. The passers-by glanced at it obliquely, as if in fear, and after having read it, hurried on. Sophie and Victor stopped.

"Read it."

Victor read this: "*Empire français:* By sentence of the Superior War Council, Generals Malet, Guidal, and Lahorie have been shot on the plain of Grenelle for the crime of conspiracy against the Empire and the Emperor."

"Lahorie," said Madame Hugo. "Remember that name."

And she added: "He was your godfather."

The Green Slippers

Eighteen hundred fourteen: the sun of May shone down into the gay streets of Paris while church bells pealed out on every side. Napoleon had abdicated. Louis XVIII had made his entry into Paris and was on his way to hear the *Te Deum* at Notre-Dame.

The king was dressed in blue. The crowd stared at his broad blue ribbon of honour, his *cordon bleu,* at the pig-tail sticking out behind his head, and at his great belly. His legs were wrapped in wide gaiters of blue velvet. He drove through the streets in a sumptuous carriage painted with *fleurs de lys,* and beside him sat the "Orphan of the Temple," the Duchess d'Angoulême, in white from the tips of her shoes to the spread of her sunshade. The Count d'Artois and the Duke d'Angoulême rode on either side the carriage, which was escorted by the red Musketeers. One of them, who was then seventeen years old, was Count Alfred de Vigny.

The king had not wished, on his passage through the town, to see the soldiers of the foreign powers: his way along the quai des Orfèvres, from the Pont-Neuf to Notre-Dame, was therefore lined by the Old Guard, with their terrible and menacing faces. These Grenadiers who had so long been the conquerors of Europe, who were covered with scars and still reeked of powder and flame, were forced to salute an old king, invalided not by battle but by time. Some of them jerked their hairy bonnets down over their eyes in order not to see him; others showed tiger-like teeth under their mustachios. When they presented arms they seemed to do it in a spasm of fury, and the sound of those arms made men tremble.

And yet the air was filled with white flags; the cries of *Vive le Roi!* echoed on every side. Shops were besieged for white ribbon, and when there was no more to be had in them, houses were invaded and petticoats were torn into strips to provide it. Everything red and blue was trampled under foot, and



Painting by Champmartin.

JULIETTE DROUET

most vigorously of all by the Bonapartists. Indeed, Madame de Chateaubriand had to struggle to defend her muslins.

There was one person whose enthusiasm was sincere, and that was Madame Hugo. Having been driven out of Spain with the rest of the French, General Hugo had stopped at Thionville and defended the town heroically. But that meant nothing to Sophie. Since Lahorie's execution her thoughts had been only of vengeance and her hour had now arrived. The Ogre of Corsica lay prone; the usurper, the murderer, was about to expiate his crimes.

Sophie had fled the Impasse des Feuillantines, for it was too filled with dear and cruel memories. She was living now in the rue du Cherche-Midi, and was now again on excellent terms with the Fouchers who had been so kind to her. Victor and Eugène were exultant. The Count d'Artois had not forgotten Sophie's plotting in favour of the Bourbons; he had commanded that the Order of the Lily be awarded both her sons. The new dignitaries, one of twelve, and the other fourteen years old, hastened to pin to their coats the white watered-silk ribbons from which hung the silver lilies, and white cockades were sewn to their hats.

Of course they would have to see the procession as it made its way to Notre-Dame! Foucher obtained the use of a window in the Saint-Jean tower of the Palace of Justice and invited Madame Hugo to share it. The two families went off together in gala attire, Adèle Foucher clinging to Victor's arm. He was enchanted to have a lily in his button-hole and a "lady" on his arm.

Madame Hugo was rejuvenated. Royalty brought back to her the memory of her dear Brittany. Her youth was born again; her broken heart swelled with joy. The bitter crease in her brow was smoothed away. A smile was on her lips. Yet her thoughts were still of vengeance. She had put away her black veils and, in honour of the return of the lily, was wearing a charming frock of white muslin and a straw hat adorned with tuberoses. But her feet were shod with green

slippers. Green was the colour of the Empire; to the day of her death she was to wear green shoes.

Bezout

Even after the garden in the Feuillantines, the plot of greenery in the rue du Cherche-Midi represented liberty. But General Hugo, on his way through Paris in September 1814, put an end to that. Between the blood-stained gaol of the Abbaye and the passage du Dragon, in dreary little rue Sainte-Marguerite, he found a sort of prison-*pension*, run by one Cordier, an ex-priest imbued with the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Before leaving with the "Countess de Salcano" for Blois, Léopold-Sigisbert turned Eugène and Victor over to this pedant. There was an end to their long strolls, their games with the Foucher children, their haphazard dipping into books, their visits to the puppet theatre which was to produce a superb play called *The Enchanted Palace*, written by Victor himself. Oh, well: in the place of the puppets they would have real actors of flesh and blood, their schoolmates from the Decotte and Cordier *pensions*. The main classroom was their theatre; desks placed close together provided their stage; beneath the desks were their wings; the desk lamps were their footlights; and the school benches were their stalls. They made helmets, epaulettes, and decorations out of pasteboard and gold and silver paper. A charred cork served to give them mustaches. Their favourite theme was the imperial epic, and Victor allotted to himself, more often than not, the principal part. When Napoleon was in the play, it was he who played Napoleon, his breast glittering with gold and silver eagles. By way of adding reality to fiction he would wear his lily along with the eagles.

Victor and Eugène were equally avid of dictatorship, and in rest periods it was always they who led the pupils. Victor's subjects were called "The Dogs," and Eugène's "The Calves," and handsome battles took place between the two. As for their

studies, they went rather well. No longer, as before, did the boys spend their time drawing: Victor illustrated his Latin books less frequently than before; he no longer gave half a page to a lively picture of the story of Manlius, or a naval combat between the Carthaginians and the Romans. He was forced to give up his carpentry, his wooden fortress built with towers, bastions, and drawbridges. The general was bound that his sons should study at the *Ecole Polytechnique*. Therefore, between October 1816 and September 1818, they were sent to be prepared in mathematics and philosophy at the *Lycée Louis-le-Grand*. There one of the science masters, Lefébure de Fourcy, juggled and played at sleight-of-hand with figures. Fascinated by his volubility, Victor went to the blackboard and horrified Lefébure by his mathematical imagination which only his ignorance equalled. During Laran's dull classes Victor built a rampart of books behind which he read Chateaubriand's *Génie du christianisme*. One day Laran caught him at it. *The Genius of Christianity!* That dangerous book! And if another of the masters, who thought well of Victor, had not intervened, Sophie's youngest son would have been expelled.

But Victor had little taste for the abstract. Despite the good marks won him by hard work, the study of algebra irritated him. "I cursed Bezout," he says in a poem, "being then a prey to mathematics . . . handed over alive to those black hangmen, figures." Yet he was particularly fond of physics, for here were phenomena one could see, could touch. His master entered him for the prize competion, the subject for which, dictated by Cuvier, was *The Theory of the Dew*. A fascinating subject for a young poet: Victor won fifth place.

The philosophy master, Maugras, who looked like Mirabeau, also entered Victor; but this time the honours list did not include his name. However, that did not matter: Victor heard excellent lectures on liberalism and stoicism; and stoicism was already very necessary to him.

Open war was declared between Sophie and her husband.

The "hero with the kind smile" had forbidden his sons to see their beloved mother. He forbade them to go out of doors on holidays even with their older brother Abel, who was allowed to see them only at Cordier's. Thus, one New Year's day when Victor wanted to go call on his mother, Decotte smacked him, and the boy wrote a pained but firm and dignified letter to the general.

Madame Martin-Chopine, the general's sister, whom he called "Goton" and the children called "Madame," held the purse-strings. It was in her care that Léopold had put them. She was not entirely regular in her payment of the two sous a day out of which Victor and Eugène had, among other things, to buy their books. The woman was a malicious she-monkey, and her nephews never forgot her "low insults" and her "disgusting scenes." Meanwhile Sophie grieved and awaited the blessed separation which would justify her in the eyes of the law.

As for Victor, the reason why he felt so full of valour and stoicism was that he had made a marvellous discovery.

My Virgil . . .

The marvellous discovery was Virgil, Virgil who taught him what poetry was, Virgil whom he translated into harmonious French verse, Virgil for whom he was always to retain a passionate admiration:

> My Virgil in my hand, a green and shadowy glade,
> Where oft I lost myself in the tranquil shade. . . .

And yet Virgil brought him ill-luck. One fine day Decotte, whose chief occupations were writing doggerel verses and spying, sprang the lock of Victor's desk and found a dozen notebooks labelled *Poésies*, including two unfinished tragedies one of which was called *Irtamène* and the other *Athélie, ou les Scandinaves*, altogether about three thousand lines. This in a lad of fourteen was scandalous! And what most infuriated the pedant

was a translation of the first Eclogue which Decotte himself had put into impoverished Alexandrines only a fortnight earlier and read to the class. And here was this snotty-nosed kid playing the rival to him! Out with him! out with him! But Cordier interposed, and Biscarrat, too, who tried rhyming in his leisure hours. They objected, and Victor remained.

It was truly Virgil who created the poet. *Irtamène* and *Athélie* were echoes of the "dramatic masterpieces" of Voltaire which Victor had been given not long since as a prize. The young author of *Irtamène* was as didactic as a contemporary of Ducis, and he softened only when he dedicated to his mother this monarchistic tragedy in which a usurper is foiled. Sophie's eyes must have been filled with sweet tears when, on New Year's day, she received these lines:

> Not these are the flowers immortal
> Which grace Racine at the banquet
> Of Gods; they are simple and natural
> As the heart which you find in this bouquet.

Already Sophie saw her youngest son in a high place, and she confided her hopes to Foucher. To hear her, this fourteen year old poet had a better right than Fouquet to the celebrated device, *Quod non ascendam?* Pierre Foucher would smile indulgently, knowing the illusions of motherhood. His mother's faith illumined, enchanted, exalted Victor:

> And my mother in secret watched as I walked,
> Weeping and smiling and saying, "A fairy
> Unseen solicits my son."

It must be admitted that this fairy had no hand in the *Déluge*, a sober poem in three cantos signed by Victor-Marie Hugo in 1816, in competition with Eugène who was then even more frenzied, more romantic, than Victor himself. In those days the fairy still sang only in honour of Virgil, but how beautiful already was her voice! How dearly the tender and pathetic Muse of Virgil loved this young and handsome adolescent, with his silken blond hair, his deep, dreamy, wilful eyes,

his straight nose, and his full lips! This child Cyclops was already "enchanted and intoxicated by strength, drawn towards it as towards one of his own blood, by fraternal attraction." His beautiful golden head bent over his Virgil, the magnetic schoolboy shuddering at "frightful Cacus" and blanching before "Cæsar crossing the Rubicon" was already filled with epic dreams. In the studious night, in the shaded candle-glow, while all about him slumbered, the sublime child felt rising within him a tumult of tempests, a sound of battle, disasters, victories, all the tumultuous existence of humanity. "I want to be Chateaubriand or nothing," he wrote in his note-book; and yet even this ambition did not suffice him. His brow in his hands, his eyes closed, Victor-Marie Hugo listened to the whisper in the august shade of millenary voices. The *Æneid* was unfolding to him his own *Légende des siècles.*

THE GOLDEN LILY

Eighteen hundred nineteen: a cold February night at number 18 of the rue des Petits-Augustins hard by the museum in which Lenoir had collected the treasures of Gothic France. A bedroom with a vaulted ceiling; a fire of branches crackling; a modest apartment. In an alcove stands a four-poster bed, and in it lies a woman no longer young, breathing with difficulty. An adolescent watches over her, his hair gilded by the vacillating lamp-light, his left hand supporting a pensive head. Under his right hand lie sheets of paper covered with small, round, curling, pretty hand writing. A respectful and obedient son.

Victor's mother believed in him, she believed in the genius of the youngest of her children. It was because she wished it that he risked his father's anger, gave up his preparation for the *Ecole Polytechnique*, and, with Eugène, left Cordier's *pension.* It did not matter now if he was not entered: the important thing was that he was to be a poet, a great poet. Two years earlier he had received an honourable mention from the

Académie Française for his *Bonheur que procure l'étude—The Happiness of Study.* One of the immortals had taken special notice of it and corresponded in verse with his fifteen year old colleague. But honourable mention is after all very little, even when one has not passed one's third form. Perhaps Toulouse the Roman would be more generous, Toulouse where every year the *Académie des Jeux Floraux*—the Academy of Floral Games—awarded Clémence Isaure's gold and silver flowers. The year before Eugène had won mention with his *Ode sur la mort du duc d'Enghien.* Victor was at work. The *Académie française* had set two new subjects: the institution of the jury system in France was one, and the advantages of education was the other. Victor had taken his chances and entered. He was to be disappointed, for in the end his eminently didactic verse went unmentioned. But there was Toulouse. In addition to its four annual prizes (the golden amaranth, the silver violet, the silver marigold, and the silver lily) and in addition to the prizes held back from earlier competitions (four golden amaranths, two silver lilies, two silver violets, and one silver souci), the Academy had decided to award in 1819 a golden lily to the author of the best ode on the re-establishment upon its pedestal of the statue of Henri IV. The subject seemed to Victor excellent, for he had never felt himself more a royalist. His hatred of Madame Martin-Chopine, his resentment against his father who was still at Blois, and his immense love for his sweet Vendean mother, as well as his new life in the midst of the returned *émigrés* who gathered about her, furnished reasons enough to make of him the most fanatical of Legitimists. As for the monument to Henri IV he knew it well. Was he not one of those who had harnessed themselves to the cart that had drawn the equestrian statue to its site by the Pont-Neuf? He had already finished two poems, the *Vierges de Verdun* and the *Derniers bardes,* the second in the manner of Ossian: he was ready now to conquer the marvellous flower, the golden lily, with an ode on the king's statue.

This ode was to be hammered in the bronze that would serve for the *Antre des cyclopes*. But no: his mother fell ill, grew worse; coughing tore her breast and a fever ravaged her. To the devil with the ode to Henri IV! He had to save his mother, watch over her. Yet each time that her fever fell she would turn to her little one, her littlest one:

"And the ode? Toulouse! The golden lily! Where is the ode?"

He would shake his head. "Mamma, Eugène stood watch last night; it is my turn to stay with you."

"Will you write it tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow will be too late; tomorrow is the last day."

Sophie called her son to her side and took him into her wasted arms: "I want you to have the golden lily. Work; work all this night. Tomorrow you will read your ode to me and I shall be cured. Tomorrow you will send your ode to Toulouse."

Victor sat before the heavy table with bowed head, musing. He would do it, he decided. He began to write. . . .

The hours went by, sounded by the copper bell of the clock. Sophie's breath came easier now. The lamp-light flickered. Victor took a branch from the fireplace and lit a candle. Fever beat in his temples. His hands shook. . . .

"I have finished, mamma, I have finished!"

A kiss was his answer. He sat on the bed, dead with fatigue. His weary eyes shut, then opened again, dilated. The last glow of the logs was smothered in ashes. In that dark and frozen chamber only the little candle was alight, flaring high before it went out, a little flame flaring and blossoming like a golden lily.

Bug-Jargal

Victor-Marie Hugo was awarded the golden lily. His mother was enchanted; his mother was cured. Toulouse the Roman showered its flowers upon the singer of Henri IV's praises.

The *Vierges de Verdun* won him a golden amaranth; the following year another golden amaranth for a poem on Moses on the Nile. At eighteen, Victor was master of the floral games. At the Capitol, in the Hall of the Illustrious, on May 3, 1819, Count Jules de Rességuier pronounced a eulogy upon Clémence Isaure and mentioned Victor in the following terms: "The eulogy of Clémence Isaure shines with the rays of glory upon the forehead of the victor, and sends forth an incense of poetry from the perfume of his youthful wreath." One of the judges, Alexandre Soumet, wrote to Victor: "Your admirers almost refuse to believe that you are only seventeen years old. You are to us an enigma whose secret is guarded by the muses." It was Soumet who was one day to call him the Sublime Child.

Victor, who was a poet and a dramatist (had he not just finished *Iñez de Castro?*) determined to write a novel. In two weeks he sketched out his *Bug-Jargal*, a story without love, a tale of the black revolt on San Domingo, of Captain Delmar (the future d'Auverney) and the slave Bug-Jargal, a sort of negro Regulus. It is told, rather than written, vibrant with life and filled with rushing dialogue. Never was Balzac, Vigny, Mérimée, nor Hugo himself to *narrate* in better fashion than this conquering apprentice. For example:

"When Captain Delmar's turn came he opened his eyes wide and confessed to these gentlemen that he could really not think of a single episode in his life which deserved their attention.

"'But, Captain,' said Lieutenant Henri, 'after all you've been everywhere, you've seen the colonies, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Spain. Captain: there's your limping dog.'

"Delmar shivered, let fall his cigar, and turned swiftly around towards the opening of his tent just as an enormous dog ran limping towards him. The dog stepped on his cigar as he came forward, but the Captain paid no attention to that. Wagging his tail, leaping, barking, the dog licked his boots and then lay down before him. The Captain was moved, his throat filled. He stroked the dog mechanically with his left hand while his right loosened the chin-strap of his helmet.

From time to time he repeated: 'There you are, Rask, there you are.' Finally he cried out: 'But who the devil brought you back?'

"'If the Captain doesn't mind, Sir——' For some time Sergeant Thadée had been holding back the flap of the tent and standing in the opening, his right arm wrapped in his military coat and tears in his eyes. . . ."

The Great Secret

Almost every evening during the winter of 1818-1819 Madame Hugo, wearing a gown of amaranth wool and a yellow shawl embroidered in palmo, accompanied by Eugène and Victor, went to call upon the Fouchers at the hôtel de Toulouse in the rue du Cherche-Midi. The callers were received in Madame Foucher's large, deep-alcoved room, where the same armchair by the fireside always stood for Madame Hugo. Without removing either shawl or hat, she would sit down, open her bag, and set to work at her needle-point. Foucher, ever silent, would sit at the other side of the fireplace with his snuffbox and a candle on a little table beside him. Between them, around a little table, Madame Foucher and Adèle would take up their needlework; Victor Foucher would be finishing his school work, and Eugène and Victor-Marie would close this silent circle. From time to time Madame Hugo would interrupt herself to take a pinch of snuff for, like Monsieur Foucher, she took snuff, and indeed she never failed to hold out her box to him. "Will you take a pinch, Monsieur Foucher?" she would ask, and Monsieur Foucher would answer yes or no. This, with their greeting and farewell, was all that was said throughout the evening.

What charm these silent evenings had for Victor! How he would hasten dinner in order to go to the Fouchers'! And how sad he grew when snow or storm prevented their going!

Adèle, in this spring of 1819, was barely sixteen, the age of Juliet. Her thick, dark, long hair framed marvellously her

pure, wide brow, a truly magnificent brow. Her black eyes, shaded by long silken lashes, were filled with an ingenuous and almost solemn expression. Her mouth with its delicate lips, her mouth in which flowered a mysterious smile, her mouth was exquisite; and the contrast between the great brave eyes and the wistful smile lent at times a wild beauty to this face of a startled nymph. With her sloping shoulders, her long, blue-black hair, and her long nocturnal eyes Adèle Foucher was the incarnation of romantic beauty. It is easier to imagine her swinging in a hammock under the palms of the Antilles than sewing beside the fire in the rue du Cherche-Midi. The blooming of her beauty was as yet unperceived by her parents and by Madame Hugo. Parents always have eyes expressly not to see.

Gradually the evenings grew milder, more tender. Winter receded. Madame Hugo seemed entirely cured. One day, by some unlooked-for luck, Victor and Adèle were left alone together for a moment in the great room. It was an evening in April; the tall windows on the garden were open; languor floated in the soft air. Victor looked in silence at his young friend. Adèle's eyes never left his face. Suddenly she spoke.

"Victor, tell me your great secret."

There was a second of uneasiness, of deep silence. Then:

"I love you."

She grew pale, blushed, and finally sighed:

"I love you, too."

It was the twenty-sixth of April. The handsome adolescent of seventeen and the girl of sixteen were betrothed. He became engaged to "her great eyes and her long hair, her deep golden skin, her red lips and her pink cheeks."

"It was on the twenty-sixth of April that I told you I loved you," he wrote her one year later; and two years after that: "Do you know, Adèle, do you remember, that to-day is the anniversary of the day which determined the fate of my life? It was on the twenty-sixth of April, 1819, one evening as I sat at your feet, that you asked me to tell you my greatest

secret, promising to tell me yours. . . . I hesitated before putting my whole life into your hands, and then I confessed, trembling, that I loved you; and after your reply, my Adèle, I had the courage of a lion. . . ."

Eagles Creep

The summer of 1819 was the first of their exchange of vows, and, to the great disappointment of Victor, the Fouchers spent it in a house they had taken at Issy. Madame Hugo and her two sons went often to knock at the door of their old friends. Once the fruits were eaten, Victor and Adèle went with simple gaiety to breathe the cool air of the garden. But not infrequently they breathed in stifling dust, too, for the serrated wall at the end of the garden gave on to the village square where the youth of the countryside danced.

In the autumn they returned to town, where Victor appeared less timid, more pressing. He had asked and obtained the right to see Adèle alone. When Madame Foucher was away, and Monsieur Foucher was at his work, Adèle would slip off through a dark passage and meet Victor under the great chestnuts of the hôtel de Toulouse; and when these meetings were impossible, they wrote letters which they slipped secretly into one another's hands. At this time Victor was writing: "I love her. . . . I am ready to sacrifice everything for her, everything, even the hope of being loved by her. There is no devotion of which I am not capable for her, for one of her smiles, for one of her glances. . . ." And he was also writing his pain and his jealousy in the *Premier soupir:* ". . . You will forget me in the midst of your pleasures; I shall remember into my grave." But most often of all this love really inspired in him "the courage of a lion."

For Adèle, he intended to conquer fame, to force the gates of the future. The laurels of Apollo no longer satisfied him. Telegraphy was invented in 1819. In the Legitimist drawing rooms, among the venerable flotsam of the emigration who con-

stituted Madame Hugo's friends and who pitied the "brigand's" son, Victor gained great applause with his first political pamphlet, *le Télégraphe.* But he was obsessed by Chateaubriand; that great writer was his model and his idol. In 1819, Chateaubriand was a peer of France. When Soumet asked Victor what was his ambition, and if he intended to pursue a literary career, the boy replied proudly: "I hope to become a peer of France." "And he will," wrote Soumet prophetically. In 1819, Chauteaubriand was directing a right-wing journal called the *Conservateur:* at the age of seventeen Victor-Marie, with his brother Abel, founded a right-wing journal, the *Conservateur littéraire.* Their fellow editors were Alexandre Soumet, Alfred de Vigny, Adolphe Trébuchet, Saint-Valry, J. Sainte-Marie, Gaspard de Pons, and Eugène Hugo.

Abel, the former page of King Joseph, published in the *Conservateur littéraire* a biting, witty definition of romanticism which struck surely and deeply: "The man who prefers the romantic view has a heart accessible to all the great passions, but he prefers above all that his passion be incomplete—for example, an unrequited love. He loves religion generally not because it is true and consoling, but because it is imperious. And therefore all incomprehensible religions were made to his measure. He is fond of contemplating the ravages of the passions in a single man, for those which they exercise upon the crowd are too easily perceived, and he must ever have something to divine. . . . Unintelligible sentiments exercise a great influence over his organs, for in order to touch his heart you have first to make his mind move. In fine, everything useless seems to him beautiful; everything he cannot understand, interesting; everything he cannot hear, admirable, for the reason that all this is romantic."

Fearing lest his youth deprive him of the serious attention of his readers, Victor signed only his translations of Virgil with his own name. More often than not, in the guise of a sly and cranky old erudite, he called himself V. d'Auverney, Aristides, E., H., B., M., U., V., and perhaps also Publicola

Patissot, a leading citizen of Massevaux. There was never anything as agreeable as the varied masks with which this child, plunged in dreams of love and fame, covering his blooming face. Writing about the *Moral and Political Reflections upon the Advantages of Monarchy,* by Madame C. de M., and desiring to express the danger to the virile sex inherent in the political and literary ambitions of the beautiful sex, he cried in the voice of a misogynist: "I do not desire that women be forbidden to write; that, indeed, would be the true means of inducing every woman to take up her pen. . . . It is a remarkable and little remarked phenomenon that the feminine mind has developed with extraordinary speed in recent times. Under Louis XIV ladies had lovers and translated Homer; under Louis XV they had friends and discussed Newton; and under Louis XVI there was a woman who set Montesquieu right at an age when she should have been learning to sew and playing with dolls. And I ask: what have we come to; what are we headed for?"

Thus far Mademoiselle might readily have thought this article impertinent; and therefore the chilled lover suddenly emerged from the costume of the fretful Cassandra: the writer excused himself gracefully. "The force of truth has carried me away. I have been obliged to defend the honour of my sex in order that it be not reduced to public submission to a yoke which it endures so comfortably in private." His little *fiancée,* who knew a good deal about this, must have smiled.

What profound judgment, what astonishing prophecy, in these one hundred fourteen articles written by the beautiful adolescent with the face of an archangel! As critic of art, he was the first to discover the influence of the Chinese upon Ingres' drawings; and while he praised Champmartin, he foresaw the romanticism of Delacroix. As critic of literature he bestowed whole-hearted praise upon the unknown poet who appeared in 1820, the Lamartine of the *Méditations.* As critic of the theatre, Victor Hugo was already winding his horn and rallying the disciples of *Hernani.* He was already announcing

the great battle to come, and his words tremble like wings: "One thing strikes us in the compositions of the youth now crowding our theatres—that they are still too easily pleased with themselves. Stooping to pick up wreathes, they lose the time they should be devoting to courageous meditation. They succeed, but it is their rivals who emerge happy from their triumphs. Young men, take care! Preserve your strength: you will need it on the day of battle. Weak birds fly straight up out of the nest: eagles creep before rising on their wings."

Genius, or Chateaubriand's Slippers

Thirteenth of February, 1820. A double bill is being played at the *Opéra:* the *Carnaval de Venise* and the *Noces de Gamache.* The Duke de Berry and his young wife are present. The young princess, being tired, leaves towards eleven o'clock, accompanied by her husband. Suddenly a man leaps upon the duke and stabs him: it is Louvel. The duke succumbs, and the Bourbon dynasty is in great peril.

The emotion of monarchist France was expressed by Victor-Marie Hugo in a burning ode which created a furor in the right-wing drawing rooms frequented by Madame Hugo. Her friends the Lucottes were enchanted.

"My dear, such a handsome child!"

"What a shame that his father should be an adventurer, a general serving B. P." (*B. P.* was an abbreviation which made it possible not to pronounce the abominable name of Buona-Parte.)

The ode on the death of the Duke de Berry was read even in the Tuileries palace. François de Neufchâteau sent it to the Duke de Richelieu, who read it to the king, and Louis XVIII, who himself rhymed from time to time, liked to recite to his intimates the stanza beginning:

Monarque aux cheveux blancs, hâte-toi, le temps presse . . .

"Make haste, thou white-haired king; time flies. . . ." More-

over, his Majesty deigned to command that five hundred francs be given to the young poet; and the worthy Neufchâteau wrote, in transmitting this good news to Hugo,

For you who now begin, this is an honour supreme;
For me who am your friend, it is a pleasure extreme. . . .

When, seven months after the duke's assassination, his widow brought into the world the Child of the Miracle, it was once more the sublime Child who spoke in the name of France:

He is born, the child of the miracle!

All the town desired the acquaintance of the inspired singer. Chateaubriand received him, and said: "Monsieur Hugo, I am charmed to see you. I have read your verses on the death of the Duke de Berry. There are things in them which no other poet of our time could have written. My great years and my experience give me the right, unfortunately, to be frank, and I tell you sincerely that there are also passages which I like less; but what is beautiful in your odes is very beautiful."

This first reception seemed to the quick-tempered youth cold. Monsieur de Chateaubriand seemed really severe, really haughty. Nevertheless, Victor-Marie decided one morning to go calling in the rue Saint-Dominique. He was dumbfounded to find an animated and affable Chateaubriand who continued to make his toilette before the sublime Child. He untied the knot of his cravat, stepped out of his green morocco slippers, undid his grey swansdown trousers, took off his shirt, his flannel vest, and took his *tub à l'anglaise* before the lad's eyes. Dried, dressed again by his faithful Julien, Chateaubriand brushed his beautiful teeth; and rejuvenated by the cold water, he won Victor by his spirited conversation. Overcome with joy at having been so far admitted into the great man's intimacy, the sublime Child composed his *Ode to Genius* in honour of Chateaubriand.

Madame de Chateaubriand thanked him for it by selling him three pounds of chocolate at an outrageous price. This gen-

erous deed left Victor without a copper and did not go far towards enriching the Marie-Thérèse infirmary. However, Victor sought not to regret it, and when the Academy of Toulouse confided to him the honour of handing to Chateaubriand his diploma as master of the floral games, he acquitted himself proudly of the mission.

Monsieur de Chateaubriand was appointed ambassador to Berlin and invited the author of the *Ode to Genius* to accompany him as secretary to the banks of the Spree. But Victor declined this flattering offer. "I cannot leave my mother," he explained.

"Only your mother, is it?" Monsieur de Chateaubriand observed with a smile. "You are free to do as you please. I am sorry that you won't come with me. It would have been an honour for us both."

The Anniversary

Twenty-sixth of April, 1820. Exactly one year since Victor and Adèle exchanged their first avowal.

Madame Hugo watched over her son with a jealous eye. He was so handsome! How he had grown! In truth, he was not small; not the least in the world. Between 1825 and the end of the second Empire his height appeared unchanged on his passports at 5 ft. 7 in. A good height. His shoulders had broadened, but his hands were still womanly. His grey-blue eyes shone magnificently, and his complexion, now very pale, now very pink, had a feminine delicacy. His astonishing vast forehead was framed in beautiful silken hair, light auburn in colour and very fine in texture. Sainte-Beuve was later to compare it to the hair of the angels painted by Rubens and Rembrandt. He was like the Marius he describes in *les Misérables:* "A lad at once ardent and cold; noble, generous, proud, religious, idealistic, honourable to the point of severity, pure to the point of savagery."

On the evening of which we write Marius's eyes were red, the

Stoic's heart was broken. Madame Foucher had ended by becoming upset over Victor's too frequent appearances in the garden of the hôtel de Toulouse. She had spoken to Monsieur Foucher, who had been inclined to indulgence: "Let the little ones grow up," he thought; "and who knows?" Monsieur Foucher had three children and no private means . . . and his daughter was without a dower: these are considerations which counsel moderation in a father. Most important of all was to learn Madame Hugo's opinion, and this was why, on the morning of the twenty-sixth of April, Monsieur and Madame Foucher came knocking on Madame Hugo's door.

What amazement they caused! "Victor! Victor? That child who only yesterday was in swaddling clothes! Victor in love? What are you telling me? In love for months? My dear friend, you're joking. And in love with Adèle, with a pigtailed nobody? You are not serious! And Madame Foucher thinks so too? Oh, no; I cannot believe it. And anyway, this is my answer: Victor is the son of General Count Hugo. He is already celebrated. He will soon be famous. And when he is, he will be able to marry the richest, the most high-born girl in France. I shall certainly not permit him to indulge this puppy love for the daughter of a clerk who has neither money nor family!"

Monsieur and Madame Foucher rose to their feet, offended. And the irascible mother went on: "Now or later, such a marriage is impossible. Never, never as long as I live, will this marriage take place!"

Monsieur Foucher turned around and said coldly: "So be it, madame. You will be good enough, hereafter, to keep your son by your side. I shall not tolerate any longer his compromising my daughter. I beg you, therefore ——"

"Victor!" called Madame Hugo.

Victor came in, singularly calm.

"Victor, Monsieur Foucher insists that you never see Adèle again. And so do I."

The beautiful blond archangel blanched frighteningly. But

he mastered himself; his eyes remained dry. Driven from Paradise, he did not turn a hair.

The door closed behind the Fouchers; old friends were forever parted. Then, alone with his mother, the man vanished and the child reappeared: a sob strangled him; he burst into tears.

"O PAGE, Ô MON BEAU PAGE! . . ."

These tears of a lover were not to dry very soon. In order to win back the favour of good Monsieur Foucher, Victor extolled to the skies, in the *Conservateur littéraire*, the *Recruiting Manual* written by Adèle's father. Monsieur Foucher maintained silence. But how was he not to reply when Victor sent round to the rue du Cherche-Midi his *Ode sur la naissance du duc de Bordeaux?* Mindful of his breeding, the former clerk of court sent his thanks to Madame Hugo for transmission to the young poet.

Monsieur Foucher was not the only reader of the *Conservateur littéraire*. The elegy on *Raymond d'Ascoli*, who was driven out by the father of his beloved, was seen by Adèle, who could not mistake the true identity of Raymond and Emma.

The rumour that a rival might win the hand of Adèle, that he might be forced upon her by her parents, inspired the pain and exasperation of the *Jeune banni*, the *Young Exile*, in which Victor begged his "Emma" to "think of me! remember your oath!" Had Emma really a short-lived memory? On the sixteenth of this same month of July, when the *Conservateur* published the poem on Raymond d'Ascoli, Victor allowed himself to be dragged to the Sceaux ball. There he saw the Fouchers, Adèle surrounded by a number of young men while he had not even the right to greet her. Jealousy heightened his passion and unchained his strength. Like the young Cid, he was ready for the challenge, ready for combat. "The years 1819 and 1820," Sainte-Beuve was later to write, "were undoubtedly the fullest, most ardent, and most decisive of his

life. Love, politics, independence, chivalry, and religion; poverty and fame, obstinate study, struggle against fate in the guise of an iron will—everything in him emerged and grew simultaneously to that degree of elevation which constitutes genius. Everything took fire, writhed, and melted intimately in the volcanically passionate flames of his being beneath the dog-days' sun of his hardy youth; and there flowed forth from him the mysterious alloy of his nature in which lava boiled under granite, a solid and burning armour with a pearl-encircled wrist, a dark and sombre blade, a true armour of giants dipped into volcanic lakes."

At about this time two great poets who became two great friends entered his life. One was Vigny; the other Lamartine. Vigny was introduced to him by Emile Deschamps; Lamartine by the handsome Duke de Rohan. And through the intermediary of Marshal Oudinot's wife, who was dame of honour to the Duchess de Berry, that great lady bestirred herself in his favour. What a handsome page for the romantic and romance-loving princess was this "studious adolescent with the grave, heavy, beautiful head" described by Lamartine!

I Do Not Want to Be Reasonable

Yet, with the help of a secret accomplice, the two little lovers were able to correspond. The piquante Julie Duvidal de Montferrier, who was later to be the Countess Abel Hugo, made it possible for the two innocents to meet—without herself knowing what she was about, they say. She was a pupil of Baron Gérard, and the little Foucher girl was her pupil. When the drawing lesson was ended and Adèle flown off, Julie would follow her with her eyes; and very often she would see a young man with grave eyes and long golden hair emerge from a doorway or a breach in a wall. And then Julie Duvidal would smile mischievously. In the turbulence of the great city the young couple would vanish, lose themselves, so tender, so pure, so young.

I Do Not Want to Be Reasonable

And Victor would write to Adèle: "Shall I tell you how many times at evening, coming home on my lonely walks, I have stopped at the end of the rue d'Assas beneath the light in your window? How many times I have thought, seeing the new leaves, of the hours we used to spend together in your garden where, if you sat down, it was beside me, and if you walked, it was with your arm in mine? Your hand never avoided mine; your eyes looked always into mine; and when, at times, I pressed you to my heart, you never failed to smile as you drew back. Adèle, Adèle, see how much I have lost!"

But they were after all to meet the next day, the twenty-eighth of April, 1821. And when one is nineteen years old, one cannot be disheartened long. "Do you know what I am thinking conceitedly and perhaps madly at this very moment? That tomorrow you will not have the courage to leave me as early as you usually do. We shall be able to go into the gardens for a bit, where we shall be alone. Your arm will lie in mine again, and I shall again be able to contemplate at my ease the happiness of which I have so long been deprived. Say it, Adèle: say you will not refuse me. . . ." And he signed this letter "thy husband."

The dark, wide-browed, dreamy-eyed, red-lipped Adèle trembled a little in fear of being met with Victor in the street, but she too was bold. Between poutings she cut for Victor one of the curls she wore in the English fashion. "I send you a lock of your wife's hair, thinking you will like to have it." Her letters were scribbled in secret, in the shadow, with the help of a few bits of pencil, on her knee. Brought to despair by Victor's "harshness" this astonishingly precocious child of eighteen answered in a sob: "If you knew how many tears you had cost me, how much sorrow, how many sleepless nights, truly you would pity me. . . . You must think I have lost my head, and perhaps it is true. . . . I do not want to be reasonable any longer. I prefer to grow faint and fall over a cliff. You don't know, dear Victor, how much a woman can love. . . ."

How were they to be brought together, when everything separated them? Odes, letters, and too infrequent meetings did not suffice to calm the amorous frenzy of the sublime Child. Inflamed by chastity, burning with desire, he thought now only of pursuing the dear evasive phantom into the enchanted realm of the imagination. Thus, in May 1821, he conceived and began to write *Han d'Islande.* "Last May," he was later to tell Adèle, "the need of elaborating certain ideas which weighed upon me and which our French verse cannot entertain, made me undertake a sort of novel in prose. I had a soul full of love, pain, and youth. You were gone; there was no living creature to whom I dared confide my secret; and I chose a mute confidant, a sheet of paper.

". . . I was trying to deposit somewhere the turbulent movements of my new and burning heart, the bitterness of my regrets, the uncertainty of my hopes. I wanted to portray a girl who would be the ideal of all fresh and poetic imaginations, a girl such as her of whom I had dreamed in childhood, such as her whom my adolescence had known, pure, fresh, angelical. It was you, beloved Adèle, whom I wished to paint, and thus comfort myself sadly by tracing the image of her whom I had lost and who seemed to belong only to the distant future of my life. I wanted to put beside her a young man, not such as I am, but such as I should like to be. . . ."

In this *Han d'Islande,* which its author was one day to decry, the sentimental idyll of Ethel and Ordener still retains its touching freshness. What a lovely picture of romantic, innocent, and passionate love is the scene of the first kiss! Like Adèle to Victor, Ethel, "smiling through her tears," avowed to Ordener her love for the first time; and the young man placed a first kiss upon Ethel's lips, "that sacred kiss which suffices in the eyes of God to change two lovers into husband and wife."

Nothing could break the charm of silence which lay over them. ". . . They were in one of those solemn moments, so

rare and brief on earth, when the soul seems to experience something of the bliss of heaven. These are indefinable moments in which two souls hold communion in a language understood only of themselves. At such times all that is human dies away, and two immaterial beings are mysteriously united for life in this world, and for eternity in the other. Ethel had withdrawn herself slowly from Ordener's arms, and they gazed at one another with intoxication in the glow of the moon. But the flaming eye of the young man breathed a virile pride and the courage of a lion, while the half-veiled gaze of the girl was stamped with that modesty, that angelical shame which, in the heart of a virgin, is mingled with all the joys of love."

Little Adèle surely trembled in reading these burning and naïve pages. Surely she saw again the evening of the twenty-sixth of April, 1819, the evening on which she confessed her great secret. Ethel, Adèle; Ordener, Victor.

Someone Is Dancing in the Night

Madame Hugo loved gardens. There had been a large one in the Impasse des Feuillantines, and another in the rue du Cherche-Midi; but in the rue des Petits-Augustins there was none. Besides, their flat was on the third story, and Sophie's weak heart made the climb difficult. For this reason they moved, soon after the beginning of the year 1821, to number 10 in the rue de Mézières, where there was at any rate a garden. Eugène and Victor proved themselves good workmen: they set bricks, whitewashed, painted on occasion; and in these hard times there were reasons why the two young poets should ruin plaster, mix lime, whiten walls, paste paper, and piece out mouldings. Gardening, which Sophie adored, was less to their taste. Weeding, clipping, and raking bored them beyond expression. But their mother worked energetically. She laid out paths, planned flowerbeds, planted columbines and harvested an inflammation of the chest.

Following a deceptive recovery came a sudden relapse. On the twenty-seventh of June her fever fell and peace returned: "Her best night," said Eugène; "she slept through from midnight." The clock struck the noon hour. Victor bent anxiously over his mother. She was dead.

Summoned in haste, Abel reached the rue de Mézières in time to accompany Victor and Eugène to the grave. The funeral procession started on the twenty-ninth of June from the church of Saint-Sulpice, where Victor had so often gone to meet his dear Adèle. Followed by old *émigrés* in coats of another age, by old Legitimist dowagers, the accomplice of Malet and of Lahorie, the sworn enemy of Bonaparte, was borne to her last resting place in the Vaugirard cemetery.

How sad was the return to the rue de Mézières! How empty the house! And yet, Victor felt himself ceaselessly in sight of an invisible gaze. The poet of the *Odes* had become a poor, despairing child. His tranquillity was gone. He roamed through Paris with reddened eyes and an anguished soul. His footsteps took him to the cemetery where rested the mother of his flesh and his soul. He prayed all day beside the flowery grave, and when the time came to close the cemetery gates he could not abandon its funeral walls, but walked round and round them. Then a thought seized him, transported him. He had one tie left with the world—Adèle. He walked to the hôtel de Toulouse, in the rue du Cherche-Midi. Soon after, in a passionate letter to his betrothed, he wrote: "I was walking as if overcome by lethargy when chance brought me to your door. It was open, and I could see lights shining in the courtyard and at the windows. I stopped before that threshold which in so long I had not crossed. I stopped mechanically. . . ."

Had he lost his "wife" as well as his mother? He thought of suicide.

"I rushed into the courtyard and ran quickly up the central staircase . . . and into the hall where we used so often to play

together. At the end of the hall, above my head, I could hear the steps of a dance. . . ."

He went up to the second story. A window opened on to the ball. He leant his burning forehead against the cool glass.

"My eyes hunted you. I saw you. . . . Mute and motionless, your Victor stood a long time in his mourning dress and gazed at his Adèle, dressed for the ball! . . ."

He came to himself finally and went slowly down the staircase of the hôtel de Toulouse.

"I went back to my house of mourning, and while you danced I began to pray for you beside the bed of my poor dead mother. . . ."

Yet Adèle was innocent in all this. The twenty-ninth of June was the feast day of St. Peter for whom her father, Pierre Foucher, had been named. The invitations had long been out when the Fouchers learned of Madame Hugo's death, and they had thought it best to hide the sad news from Adèle.

The next day Adèle was strolling in the War Council garden. Pale, dressed in black, a young man appeared. It was Victor. Filled with anxiety, she ran towards him.

"What has happened? Something dreadful?"

"My mother is dead. She was buried yesterday."

Tears fell from the beautiful, the languorous and proud black eyes. In truth, Adèle had known nothing of this. Hands clasped Victor's hands. A heart beat beside his heart. The great void left by the death of his mother was to be filled—and so sweetly!—by the little *fiancée*.

The Passionate Pilgrim

On the fifteenth of July the Foucher family left for Dreux. Monsieur Foucher rubbed his hands. He had not omitted, on addressing his condolences to the Hugos, to warn Victor that he must give up seeing Adèle; but can you ever depend upon poets? However, Dreux was farther away than Gentilly, or

Sceaux. This time the lovers were really parted. Victor would no longer hang about Adèle; and as his good mother had not left him a copper, he would have enough to think about to keep himself from starving in Paris.

But Foucher had counted without his man. In three stages of travel Victor was at Dreux. He arrived on the nineteenth, white with dust, for he had covered the whole sun-burnt way on foot without the shade of a shade. His friend Count Alfred de Vigny, who was at the time an officer in the fifth regiment of the Royal Guard, stationed at Rouen, had a letter from Dreux in which Victor wrote: "I am weary but full of pride at having done twenty leagues on foot, and I look upon all carriages with pity." Victor told Alfred of his visit to the ruined Château of Dreux, which enchanted him. And how was he not to deplore the absence of Druidical remains in a town which owed its name to the Druids? The banks of the little stream in which, on arriving the day before, the young gipsy had bathed, were green and cool. It was good to stroll there under the aspen and the birches. All this was told, but Victor forgot to relate the mishap which had all but caused him to be cast into the gaol of Dreux.

His comings and goings, his busied air, his unshaven face, his ill-tied cravat, his disordered hair, and his dust-covered clothes had drawn upon him the attention of the police. In vain they demanded his papers and his passport. He could not tell them the true, the only reason, why he had come to Dreux.

"Have it your way, my little man," said the police officer at last. "I have orders to arrest everybody who doesn't belong hereabout and whose papers are not in order. Come along."

Luckily, Victor remembered at that moment that he had called, only a few hours before, upon Madame le Brun in the rue Evêché, a near relative of his friend Monsieur de Tollry, and that she had asked him to dine with her that very evening. They went together to Madame Le Brun. This venerable

dame certified that she knew Monsieur Victor Hugo, that her nephew had recommended him particularly to her, and, in a word, that she would answer for him. The police officer withdrew, and after an excellent dinner at Madame Le Brun's, Victor went off to spend the night at the Paradise Inn, and not in gaol.

Dreux held not only the Paradise Inn, but Paradise itself as well. For Victor, Paradise was Adèle. And he had a glimpse of Paradise. Monsieur Foucher spied him roving about his brother-in-law Asseline's house, while Victor imagined himself to have been as invisible as a fairy and wrote Adèle's father one of the most extravagant letters in the world, a tissue of fabrications more ingenuous than ingenious, which began as follows:

"I had the pleasure of seeing you this very day here at Dreux, and I wondered if I could be dreaming. I do not believe you saw me, or at least, I was exceedingly anxious about it. . . ."

For the rest, "the most curious coincidence" was easily explained. Had not Victor been invited to stop with a friend who lived between Dreux and Nonancourt? But by dashed ill luck, the friend had gone off the day before for Gap. What was he to do? Go back? Victor wanted to, but he was so well known in Dreux! Invitations and engagements on every side. "The strange thing is that I left Paris with the greatest reluctance. The desire you expressed not to see me for some time had a good deal to do with my decision. Your advice has turned out most curiously. . . ."

In the end, however, the wolf peered out from beneath the sheep's clothing, and our impostor became entirely sincere:

"I should not be frank with you if I did not tell you that an unexpected glimpse of your daughter caused me the greatest pleasure. Let me say to you without dissimulation that I love her with all the strength of my soul, and in my deep sorrow, my entire abandonment of the world, she alone is left to bring me joy."

"Hm!" mumbled Monsieur Foucher on reading this incredible composition. "How is one to fight against a will like his? We'll have a look at this lad whom nothing can discourage."

Victor saw Pierre Foucher again, and what was still better, saw again his little *fiancée*.

"Monsieur Foucher," the bold youth dared say, "I have the honour to ask the hand of Mademoiselle Adèle."

Monsieur Foucher's thin mouth tightened and his crabbed nose lengthened. Madame Foucher turned with absorption to her English embroidery. Adèle, who was arranging flowers in a vase, smiled to herself. . . .

"My situation? Excellent. My mother has left me enough money to allow me to await events. Novels earn a great deal of money. I have begun a novel in the manner of Walter Scott. Monsieur Alissan de Chazet, a fellow-member of the *Société des Bonnes Lettres*, has been good enough to offer to intercede in my favour with the Count de Pradel. His wife had the kindness to speak for me herself, and a pension has been promised me—although that will be a small enough recompense for my services in the royal cause."

"And what about the general's consent?"

Here Victor blushed slightly.

"I am sure I can get that if we do not move too suddenly."

Monsieur Foucher sent forth a questioning glance at his wife, whose kindly face had softened. Then he turned towards Adèle, who was imploring him silently:

"Very well," he decreed finally. "Victor, I agree to receive you again in my home; but on this condition, that until you have an assured situation, and until General Hugo will have given his consent, there shall be no mention of an engagement. You shall see Adèle once a week, but in our presence only. We will meet in the Luxembourg Gardens, we will go together to the theatre, and so on. Do you agree to that, Victor?"

"Do I agree!"

A filial kiss attested the young man's joy. Madame Foucher

was so moved that she pricked herself, and a rosy drop of blood reddened the white linen. Adèle seemed about to fall: her fingers opened, and the ground at her feet was covered with cornflowers, poppies, and scabiosæ.

The Chief of the Recruiting Division sat up very straight, and his nut-cracker face relaxed.

"Now," he concluded, "Madame Foucher, we have nothing more to do at Dreux. Tomorrow we shall return to Paris."

"To eat up one's clothes and one's watch was bad enough. But more horrible were the breadless days, the sleepless nights, the candleless evenings, the cold fireplace, the weeks without work, a future without hope, a coat out at the elbows, an old hat that made girls in the street laugh, a door found shut at night because one had not paid one's rent, the insolence of the porter and the waiter, the sneers of the neighbours, the humiliation, the repressed dignity, the chores one agreed to do, the disgust and bitterness and overwhelming misery. Marius learned to eat of these, and that often these are all one has to devour. At a time of life when a man needs pride because he needs love, he felt himself ridiculed because he was shabbily dressed, and made an object of mockery because he was poor. At a time when youth swells the breast with an imperial pride, he lowered his eyes more than once because of his ragged boots, and he learned the meaning of unjust shame and the poignant blushes of misery. Out of these terrible and admirable trials the weak come forth infamous and the strong sublime. This is the ditch into which Destiny flings a man whenever it desires to make a scoundrel or a demi-god. . . ."

This indigent Marius of *les Misérables* was Victor Hugo in 1821. His mother had left him nothing but debts; and it was only the generosity of a few friends which had permitted her a decent burial. As for General Hugo, three weeks after

Sophie's death he married, in the town of Chabris, "Marie-Catherine Thomas y Cactoin, thirty-seven years old, widow of Anaclet d'Almet, landowner, so-called Countess of Salcano," the Corsican adventuress who had shared his life, day by day, for eighteen years. He did something for his sons, but his half-pay could help them very little. Still, Victor and his father now corresponded regularly, since his father's consent was necessary to the engagement with Adèle. In default of gold pieces General Hugo, who also toyed with the Muse, poured out upon Victor his advice concerning versification. Unfortunately, the old man's Pegasus was not edible.

Victor had gone to live with Adolphe Trébuchet, a law student and one of his cousins, at number 30 in the rue du Dragon, and in those humble lodgings this Marius swept the stairs. Proud as a page, he waited for the fog to come down before going out to buy his loaf of bread and cut of Brie cheese and bring them back to his garret as furtively as if he had stolen them.

"Sometimes they saw, slipping into the corner butcher shop, standing among the chattering cooks who elbowed him aside, an awkward young man with books under his arm and with something at once timid and angry in his face. He would come in, take off his hat from his perspiring forehead, bow deeply to the astonished butcher's wife, bow also to the butcher, ask for a mutton chop, pay the six or seven sous it cost, wrap it up in paper, put it between two books under his arm, and leave. That was Marius. The chop, which he cooked himself, had to do three days. On the first day he ate the lean, on the second the fat, and on the third he gnawed the bone."

Victor had seven hundred francs with which to live a whole year, and yet he managed to buy a bluebottle coat, with gold buttons, to wear when dining out. How many chops that coat could have bought!

Yes, but there was love, an archangel's love. He was bound he would bring to this ideal love "a pure body and a virgin

heart." On the twenty-third of February, 1822, three days before his twentieth birthday, he wrote to his beloved: "I should consider any girl an ordinary woman (which is to say very little indeed) who married a man without being morally certain, from what she knew of the character and principles of the man, that he was not only morally well-behaved, but also—and I use expressly the proper word in all its meaning—a *virgin*, as virginal as herself. . . ."

Like Victor himself, it was in the Luxembourg, that old garden ever propitious to lovers, in its shady and meditative paths, that Marius used to meet the adorable visage of love:

"One mild day, when the Luxembourg was bathed in shadow and sunlight and the sky was as pure as if the angels had washed it that morning, while the sparrows peeped in the deep leaves of the chestnut trees, Marius opened his heart to nature. . . ."

The Shadow of Lahorie

From the time when Major Delon, commissioner to the War Council, had prosecuted Lahorie and asked for the death penalty, the Hugo boys had never again seen the Delons. But one day in January 1822, when Victor was returning to his garret, he heard a report which revived a thousand memories of childhood. Edouard Delon, the former student at the *Ecole Polytechnique* with whom the Hugo and the Foucher children had played together, had been condemned to death by default for having taken part in the Saumur conspiracy. Thus, by a turn of the wheel of fortune, the son of him who had sent Victor's godfather to Grenelle was charged with conspiracy and condemned to death.

Victor, who had written to Adèle that "a great soul and a great poetic talent are almost always inseparable, and love, in its true and divine acceptation, elevates all sentiments above the miserable human sphere, because the lover is bound to an

angel who raises him towards heaven,"—Victor did not hesitate. His own resentment, and the ineradicable hatred of the Delons sworn by his mother after Lahorie's execution, were forgotten. A friend of his youth was in hiding, tracked. He might be delivered over to the executioner at any moment. True, Delon was fighting against the legitimate monarchy; but what of that? Where was he to find a safer refuge than in the lodgings of him who had praised Louis XVIII and the Duke de Bordeaux? Good thing Trébuchet had not come in. Victor re-read the report in the *Quotidienne*. Then he sat down, put to one side a package of proof-sheets of his *Odes*, took up his pen, and wrote:

"Madame Delon, Saint-Denis.

"Madame, I have just learned that your son is proscribed and a fugitive. Our opinions are different, but that is one more reason why no one will come to look for him here. I am waiting for him. He will be welcome, no matter at what hour of the day or night he arrives." . . .

What a child! Victor put into the post box this letter addressed to the mother of a man hunted by the police. When it reached Madame Delon she saw that it had been opened; therefore she accused Victor of various enormities.

Victor Hugo did not learn the end of this story until three years later. It was a fact that the espionage division had opened the letter. Roger, the director of the postal service and a member of the *Académie Française*, had himself shown it to the king. Refuge was offered a conspirator who had been condemned to death, and the signer of this imprudent letter was none other than a zealous defender of the throne and the church, a ward of the Duchess de Berry. What were they to do? It was no good setting a trap to arrest the conspirator in the poet's garret, for they knew that Delon had left France. Should they summon the audacious young man and browbeat him roundly? If they did, he would learn things which governments usually desire to remain secret. Louis



Painting by Louis Boulanger.

MADAME VICTOR HUGO

XVIII, a man of spirit, found the only reply worthy of a sovereign:

"A stout lad! I'll give him the next pension that falls vacant."

"Happiness Is on the Way"

"I love and respect the memory of my mother, and I am forgetting her by writing to my father."

It was true that this passionate son had not accepted the new Madame Hugo without bitterness. But what was he to do? Was he to forgo the consent of the half-pay general to his marriage with Adèle? The consent arrived. On the thirteenth of March, 1822, Victor, wild with joy, wrote to the little *fiancée* who was already talking of eloping with him:

"Adèle, my Adèle, I am drunk with joy! My first emotion must be for you. I spent eight days preparing myself for a great sorrow and it is happiness that is on the way. . . ."

Spring of 1822. Blood flowed in torrents in the cause of Greece. Threats of the plague and of death reached France from Spain. At Verona, diplomatists were sharpening their claws. From La Rochelle to Strasbourg and from Boulogne down to Toulon the *carbonari* were whetting their stilettoes. The trial of the four sergeants of La Rochelle was in process. Gascony, in the person of shrewd Villèle, reigned once more over France. But what did politics matter? Victor had friends, good and great friends—the abbé de Lamennais, the Duke de Rohan, Count Alfred de Vigny. Yet even friendship was a lesser thing. Spring of 1822! "Happiness is on the way. . . ."

Happiness! The town of Gentilly: an old parish house dating from the time of Louis XV, with a Gothic tower in which the bridegroom-to-be was lodged. The Foucher family occupied the first story, with windows on Bicêtre and the charming valley of the Bièvre river which meandered through the green meadows between the curtains of poplar trees. Two

children were playing gaily in the shady paths: one was Paul Foucher, Adèle's youngest brother; the other was a "pleasant boy with a supple body, flaxen hair, a straight clear glance, flaring nostrils, and parted vermilion lips." He was twelve years old and he wrote ballads in rhyme; his name was Alfred de Musset.

Two young couples strolled and crossed one another in the shady paths. Here was the owner's grandson accompanied by Dr. Pariset's daughter. They, too, were to be married in a few weeks. They stopped before every flower-bed, and the future bridegroom would gather for his future bride bouquets so big that she could scarcely carry them. There were Victor and Adèle in the twilight of each day, watching the sun disappear behind a hill. The four lovers came, went, and radiated. What kids they were, these lovers! One day Victor brought his *fiancée* a carefully pinned paper, surely a marvellous flower. What precautions Adèle took to undo the paper! Horrors! Screams of fright and a flight through the yoke-elms! The marvellous flower was a bat.

"But read it! Read what I've written!" cried Victor, running after her.

She stopped finally, came back to the crumpled paper she had thrown from her in fright, picked it up, read it, and understood. The bat which had so greatly frightened her shared with Victor his room in the tower, and it was to this bat that Victor had written a poem. Happiness. In 1823, hardly a year after their wedding, Victor and Adèle were to make their first pilgrimage to the cradle of their happiness.

Happiness! This magnificent and redoubtable word, which men pronounce with a shiver, was written proudly, bravely by Victor Hugo on the first page of the first copy of his first volume, *Odes et poésies diverses,* which appeared in June. With a flowered pen, adorned for the epithalamium, he wrote, the sublime Child whose youthful fame Paris was to celebrate on the following day wrote, while the ecstatic little girl looked

on among the blossoming roses: "To my beloved Adèle, to the angel who is my sole glory and its sole happiness."

The Path Through the Night

The church of Saint-Sulpice. In the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin where, the year before, prayers had been offered over Madame Hugo's coffin, two young people, two children, knelt beneath the innocent veil. Behind them were their relatives, the Fouchers and the two Hugo brothers; their witnesses, Count Alfred de Vigny and Biscarrat, the master from the Cordier *pension*, Jean-Baptiste Asseline and the Marquis Duvidal de Montferrier; and their friends, Emile Deschamps, Julie Duvidal, Alexandre Soumet, Ancelot, and Alphonse de Lamartine, among others.

Lamartine. Thirty-five years afterward, aged, crabbed, and in pain, he was to call up this nuptial day of the twelfth of October, 1822, in a copy of the *Contemplations* sent to Madame Victor Hugo: "The day when that husband, like a vintner drunken with his vines, led thee by the hand to his humble home . . ." Poor human happiness! Frail human happiness!

At the hôtel de Toulouse, where the wedding repast went on for hours, all was not "honey and milk, flowers, fruit, and foliage." In the hall of the War Council now become a ballroom, in the very room in which Lahorie, Victor's godfather, had been sentenced to death, at the moment when the chaste and passionate young husband, who had never known other kisses than those of his Adèle, was carrying off the little bride with tender fury, a cry rang out. The guests ran towards the tumultuous sound of threatening, incoherent words, where a man stood struggling, gesticulating. Biscarrat and Abel seized the frenzied man, gripped him fast, and dragged him into his room where, several hours later, they found him with an axe, chopping the furniture. A madman, a madman. Eugène had gone mad. Already on the day after Victor had obtained the general's consent to the marriage Eugène had fled

far, very far, "no matter where, no matter where, so that it be out of the world!" And on this day he had not been able to endure the slow progress of the nuptial ceremony at the town hall and the church and finally the hôtel de Toulouse. From his earliest years Eugène, like Victor, had loved and worshipped Adèle Foucher. The thought that a man's rival is his own brother is enough to affect the sanest mind. Now Eugène was mad, mad with love, dangerously mad. This warm and colourful poet was to end his life a miserable shred of a man in the asylum at Charenton "on the high hill."

When he awoke the next day in an awakening that he believed was to be an enchantment, Victor learned the frightful story; and perhaps, his heart filled with anguish in the midst of the golden promises of life, perhaps he repeated with old Homer: "The path through the night joins the path through the day."

A Neighbour

Eighteen hundred twenty-three. The path through the night joins the path through the day. At the beginning of February a ruined marquis, Monsieur Persan, published *Han d'Islande*. Death and damnation! Hell and fury! The hero of this black novel feeds on human flesh and drinks out of his victims' skulls "sea water and the blood of men." *Han d'Islande* did not have the success of the *Odes*. The Liberal journals ridiculed it unmercifully: "In one of Monsieur Victor Hugo's *Odes*" remarked mischievously the *Mercure du dix-neuvième siècle*, "we find these lines which may be applied to *Han d'Islande:*

> It fills your sleep with vague horrors
> And leaves behind a long boredom in the soul"

But to the gilded youth of this year of grace 1823 no novel was ever frenetic, ever blood-stained, ever cruel enough. It was the period when Mérimée was getting ready to publish, at the

head of his *Famille de Carvajal,* this pretended letter from a timid girl:

"Sir, I am fifteen and a half years old and mamma does not want me to read novels or romantic dramas. In fact, I am forbidden everything that is horrible and amusing because they say it soils a young person's imagination. I do not believe this. . . . Could not you, sir, write me a very dark, very terrible little drama or little novel, filled with crimes and with love *à la Lord Byron?* . . ."

Charles Nodier who with Maturin was the inventor of the novel of horror, could not but applaud; and in the *Quotidienne* he praised the young novelist who had then just attained his majority. Nodier's was the divination of the good critic. The frenzy in the novel did not hide from him the health and muscle and blood in the writer:

"Finally," he concluded his review, "we have here a lively, picturesque, sinewy style, and, what is more astonishing, that delicacy of tact and of sentiment which are acquired only in life and exist here in most surprising contrast to the barbaric play of a diseased imagination."

Naturally, Nodier and Hugo were to meet and to become friends.

After having charmed Nodier, *Han d'Islande* had the good luck to please the king. A second largesse, this time of two thousand francs, was accorded. The young couple would now be able to breathe more freely.

With Soumet and Guiraud, with Vigny and Saint-Valry, with Desjardins and Emile Deschamps, Victor Hugo founded the *Muse française.* This was a French Muse in troubadour's costume, the centre of triumph of "gilded chivalry, the charming middle ages of châtelaines, pages, godmothers, the Christianity of chapels and hermits, poor orphans, little mendicants," and elves and sylphs.

Eighteen hundred twenty-three: still a year of happiness, since they are back again at Gentilly. Under the high poplars that line the Bièvre there lingers now a young woman heavy

with her fruit; and the twenty year old husband, mad with joy, gathers all the flowers, all the perfumes, all the corollas of his genius in flower:

To thee! Again to thee! What shall my lyre sing?
To thee a hymn of love! To thee a hymn of hymen! . . .
My branch now blooms anew, with sap and with verdure!

Yes, the branch of the Hugos had reflowered. A child was born to them, "voiceless and listless of eye" as his father had been. He was baptised Léopold, for his grandfather, and this time the general came to Paris, bringing with him his second wife, whom Victor called "Léopold's grandmamma."

The son began to recognise and love his father. Once again, as in his childhood, the great Napoleonic epic, of which the general was one of the heroes, began to call to Victor and change his heart: "I have dreams of battle in my restless soul. I should have been a soldier, had I not been a poet," he writes in one of his poems.

In those hours when the general and his son opened their hearts to one another, the older man explained and excused himself. He pictured the long isolation in which he was left by Sophie, who, he acknowledged, was doubtless a better mother than wife. The clouds were scattered; Victor understood. He gazed with emotion at his little Léopold, asleep in the arms of the old warrior.

The air of Paris was bad for the infant, apparently, since his grandfather and "grandmamma" took him back with them to Blois. But nothing could reanimate so frail a being, and on the eighth of October he succumbed. The path through the night joined the path through the day.

Following the success of *Han d'Islande* and the king's pension, the young couple were able to leave the hôtel de Toulouse and take a flat of their own at number 90, rue de Vaugirard. Near by, at 94, lived an ugly, dreamy, sly, morose adolescent with his mother. Victor saw him often, but never knew his name. One day, however, he inquired.

"That young man?" said someone. "His name is—his name is Sainte-Beuve."

The Magic Horn

On that evening in December 1824 the *Freischuetz* was given at the *Odéon.* Already young romanticism was winding its horn. Painters, sculptors, and long-haired poets had come to defend Weber's music against the jeers of the academic clan. It was cold under the arches of the theatre. A young man with a thoughtful face, gold-chestnut eyes, curly hair, a sharp nose, a sensual and expressive mouth, a wilful chin that jutted forth between the points of a collar below which hung a white cravat, hung with tender solicitude over his proud and beautiful dark-haired companion, who wore a large Waverly *béret* and a geranium-pink velvet greatcoat lined with white swansdown. The booking office was late in opening. Gallantly, a tall, thin, dark-skinned lad with a military air and a warm glance, made way for the lady in pink. Her companion thanked him, and they exchanged names.

"Achille Devéria."

"Victor Hugo. My wife."

"Monsieur Victor Hugo! You don't tell me! And you have never heard the *Freischuetz?*"

"Never."

"This is the twelfth time that I shall applaud Weber and make them repeat the drinking song and the hunters' chorus."

"My wife, who draws very well herself, thinks most highly of your great talent, Monsieur Devéria. We admire your Byron so much."

The artist bowed. "I draw with great facility. If Madame Hugo had an album ——"

"I shall have one tomorrow."

"You must come to see us. We are at 90, rue de Vaugirard. Do you live near us?"

"At 81, rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs and 66, rue de l'Ouest. The house in which my family live has two entrances."

Victor Hugo rubbed his hands. "We are neighbours," he said.

The doors opened. Were they to see one another again? The very next evening Achille Devéria was in the rue de Vaugirard, improvising with his particular talent one of his exquisite drawings.

"You must promise to come and make more of them," said Adèle, enchanted to see herself so gracious and so recognisable.

"Of course I will."

The album became the pretext of a friendship. Achille had two pupils, his brother Eugène, and Louis Boulanger. Henceforth, all three found their covers laid whenever they chose to run in on the Hugos. These improvised meals would have been scant if there had not been the rum omelette. The rum, unfortunately, could not have been of the best, for they used up many boxes of matches to make it flare up.

It was only a few doors to the Devérias'. Once they went through the gate at 66, rue de l'Ouest, they followed a long arboured path which led to the house, where a handsome group of chestnut trees reigned over a lawn grown with flowerbeds and planted to fruit trees. In the house they would find grandmother François-Chaumont, a bright-eyed lively old lady, and her daughter, the mother of the two young men, who was, by contrast, as eternally indolent as a Creole. She was so fat that she looked like a mass of snow.

The eldest son, Théodule, was in India. Octavie, a deformed but pretty sister, served as housekeeper and saved the money earned by Achille. Eugène, who had studied in the Girodet and the Lethière *ateliers*, was now drawing and painting with his brother. He wore a wide-brimmed felt hat, a full beard, and a flowing Castilian cape. The younger sister, Laure, was beginning to do water-colours of flowers that were ravishing and somewhat in the Chinese manner. It was Laure who

played the guitar and who, with a flower in her hair, was to be the toasted and beloved darling of the romantic movement.

On Sundays, all of Young France and all the ragged Republicans assembled in the rue de l'Ouest. During the summer they were out of doors; in winter they clustered around the piano, and when there were enough of them they organised a quadrille, to the great joy of Adèle Hugo, who loved to dance. There was Emile Deschamps, and Eugène Delacroix, Alfred de Musset, Paul de Musset, Alexandre Dumas, Henriquel-Dupont, Célèste Motte, who was to become Madame Achille Devéria; and Charles Nodier and his daughter Marie, who inspired the celebrated sonnet of Arvers, Mélanie Waldor, Madame Paradol, Eugénie de Foa, the kind and gracious Madame Tastu. Liszt played for them as a child. And, isolated by his ugliness and ungainliness, spying in secret despair upon them, a fugitive phantom, dancing, evasive, ruminating heaven knows what tortuous thought under the chestnut trees, there was soon to be seen young Sainte-Beuve.

Blois in the Rising Sun

Léopold was followed by Léopoldine. But this time the child brought by Adèle into the world would live. Happy Didine was nursed by no one but her mother. Yet in the early days of 1825 there was talk of sending her to Blois when, one fine day in March, Léopold-Sigisbert and his wife turned up again in Paris. The general's wife, after all, was Didine's godmother. The days passed agreeably by, the debonair old warrior living happily with the enamoured young couple beside Léopoldine's cradle, which was hung with a curtain of stars. When, in April, the half-pay officer and the ex-Countess de Salcano went back to Blois, they took with them the young people's promise to visit them before the month was out.

Louis XVIII was dead, but Charles X, counselled by Sosthène de La Rochefoucauld, continued to extend the royal favour to the author of the *Odes*. On the sixteenth of April,

as Victor was settling his wife and child into the mailcoach, a court servant ran forward out of breath with a great envelope sealed with red wax. It was Victor's knighthood in the Legion of Honour. Victor and Lamartine had been decorated by executive order.

The journey to Blois, the first taken together by the young couple, was never to be forgotten by Victor. At night, in the coach, he composed the ballad of the two archers which opens:

C'était l'instant funèbre où la mort est si sombre ——

"It was the funereal moment in which death is so dark." The last lines ended, weary of seeing on both sides of the coach the herds of cattle moving up towards Paris from the Duchy of Orleans, he fell asleep. At Blois he had to be wakened by the driver.

What an awakening! "A thousand windows at a time, a confused, disorderly mass of houses, belfries, a château, and, on the hill, a crown of great shadows—an entire town haphazardly spread in the form of an amphitheatre." The sun arose over Blois.

A quarter of an hour later they were at 73, rue de Foix where, in a garden behind a closed gate, a man sat at work. That man came forward to open the gate. His father! They embraced, and the cockerel said to the grizzled veteran, "Here, this is for you," and handed him the red-sealed envelope. What he had not been able to win by strokes of his sabre the young captain of the army of romanticism had won by strokes of his pen. Brutus-Léopold, delighted, kept the parchment; and he did what they do on the field of battle, he took from his own buttonhole the broad red ribbon and decorated his son.

A few days afterward Victor wrote to Vigny, who had recently married and was leaving Paris: "I am here in the most lovely town you can imagine. The streets and houses are dark and ugly, but the way both banks of the beautiful Loire are lined is a delight to the eye: on one side, an amphitheatre of

gardens and ruins, and on the other, a plain drowned in verdure; and at each step a memory springs up."

It was at Blois that Victor discovered and learned to love old France. It was at Blois that he placed the first act of *Marion de Lorme*, that he began to draw old houses, that he finally learned to understand his father, "the hero with the kind smile," and that he first conceived that boundless admiration for the old "brigands of the Loire" of whom Gautier had said that they were "the day of which we are the evening, and perhaps the night."

Here, *Eighteen Hundred Eleven* and *Waterloo* found their poet. In his declining years, during his exile on the island of Guernsey, the great seer of Hauteville-House was to evoke, with sublime emotion, his youthful impressions: "My Blois, my own Blois, my luminous Blois. . . . Blois is to me radiant. I see Blois only in the rising sun. This is the effect of youth and fatherland. . . ."

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How Victor Hugo Became a Valet

"No pomp, the king on horseback, the church unadorned except for its old arches and its old tombs. Both Houses in attendance: the oath of fidelity to the Charter spoken aloud on the Gospels."

Such had been Chateaubriand's romantic counsel, but the sumptuous plans of Robelin, the architect, had won the day, and the cathedral of Rheims was hidden under pasteboard and illuminations for the crowning of Charles X. In the nave were three rows of galleries hung with ogives of paper. Despite this the sight was a splendid one: silk, satin, velvet, plumes, "a swarm of men in full dress and of women brilliant in laces and jewels"; besides which the sun was shining so gloriously that the Bourbons remarked that it was "at least as brilliant as that of Austerlitz."

Early in the day four guests in gala dress *à la française* appeared at the barrier hung with blue cloths, and were asked

for their cards of invitation and told where to find their seats by the royal guard. They had spent four days crowded in a large carriage—Charles Nodier, his friends the Cailleux, Alaux, the painter, dubbed "the Roman," and Victor Hugo who, invited to the coronation, had been obliged to hasten from Blois in great sadness at leaving Adèle for the first time. What a journey theirs had been over the road from Paris to Rheims, raked and sanded like a garden path for the occasion, crowded with berlins, public coaches, escutcheoned carriages, char-à-bancs, and carrioles. Thanks to their good humour and to the games of *écarté* played by Nodier and Monsieur de Cailleux, the travellers survived the journey fairly well. But their luggage! They had to get out, fortunately, at the foot of every rise in the road in order to spare the horses; and thus they gleaned more than one five-franc piece on their way. It was astonishing with how many of these *écus* the king's highway was strewn. "Hm," said Nodier; "the king wanted the roads leading into Rheims paved with silver, but Monsieur de Villèle, who insists upon healthy finances, was quick to put a stop to this mad prodigality. I say! A cross of the Legion of Honour!"

It was Victor's: his valise had a hole in it, and every time the carriage bounced, something was shaken out. Monsieur de Cailleux's box was stout; but what of Alaux's bag? That *Prix de Rome* lost his sketchbooks, his pencils, and his pens. As for Nodier, when they reached Rheims he had not a collar to wear, and he wrote to Madame Nodier: "As for the case you had made—and where the deuce did you get the notion of having a case made?—it got lost somewhere on the way. Not a lath of it is left. Its contents, through some miracle, remained, and though they were soiled and crumpled, we found everything but the collars trailing behind the carriage."

When they reached the city of Saint Rémi they found that the room for which Madame Foucher had paid 350 francs had been re-let to someone else, and there was not so much as a garret to be had in the town for love of gold. All Paris, all

France, indeed all Europe was at Rheims. The Duke of Northumberland had taken a house for three days at 30,000 francs a day, or 400 francs an hour! After many and many a rebuff, Nodier and his friends had resigned themselves to spending the night in the carriage when suddenly he heard himself called:

"Nodier!"

"Salomé!"

Salomé was the manager of the theatre at Rheims.

"Where are you stopping?"

"In the street."

"Nonsense. Come to supper with me after the show."

Salomé went off.

"Well," said Cailleux, rubbing his hands; "at least we shall be supping with the Circes of the theatre."

"I'm not so sure of that," murmured Victor with a worried air.

Alaux and Cailleux were astonished and the kindly Nodier smiled. He who was so in love with his dear Désirée understood the delicate protest of young Hugo, passionately in love and offended by the idea of supping with a troupe of actresses while Adèle waited for him at Blois. "Come, come," he said, tapping the poet on the shoulder. "It will be at least as difficult to find a place to eat as to sleep to-night. Poor Victor, I am worried over your future. You are terribly young, and I am afraid you are terribly virtuous."

With lowered eyes and great reluctance, Victor Hugo followed his friends to Salomé's supper. What will Adèle think if she finds out? . . . Between two cups of champagne he made the acquaintance of Mademoiselle Florville, of the theatre. She had a sitting room and a bedroom, and was ready to give up her sitting room to the Parisians: there was a daybed in it already, and with three mattresses on the carpet an excellent dormitory could be created. Still Victor thought regretfully of their carriage; but there was nothing to be done, for it was pouring rain out of doors and they would have no sun before the coronation.

His presence at Mademoiselle Florville's turned out to be of some utility. When, the next morning, Nodier had to get into his official costume, his full dress, lace jabot, cuffs, sword, and the rest, he found that he needed help. Victor was called to the rescue, and became thus for the time his valet.

Our travellers did not waste their time at Rheims. Victor was to remember the Fléchambault and Bassée gates, the Cabaret-les-Vautes, the Vesle river, and use them as a setting for the story of Chantefleurie in *Notre-Dame de Paris*. Nodier, who knew English well, translated Shakespeare for Victor at Rheims. Victor, mad about architecture, became the victim of the demon Ogive; Nodier, mad about old books, was tormented by the devil Elzevir. Rummaging in a second-hand shop, Nodier unearthed a great Spanish tome; and evenings, after they had read Shakespeare, Victor would translate aloud the old Castilian poem and grow drunk with its sonorities and brilliant imagery. It was in the city of the coronation, to the sound of the bells of Rheims, that was born the first thought of the little epics in which the beat of the wings of the *Légende des siècles* begins to be heard.

Lamartine and Mont Blanc

The coronation ode delighted the king, and the son's fame rebounded upon the father. Count Hugo was promoted to be lieutenant general. On the twenty-fourth of June, Charles X received the young poet laureate. Fortunately, Victor was able to procure the proper dress for the royal audience. He did not need to borrow breeches from Brifaut, since he had those worn at the coronation which had been ordered six weeks earlier through Monsieur Foucher.

The author of the *Ode sur le Sacre* was welcomed at the Tuileries with great favour. In reporting the audience a few days later the *Moniteur* added: "The Viscount Sosthène de La Rochefoucauld, head of the department of the Fine Arts, has informed Monsieur Victor Hugo that his Majesty, desiring to

attest the satisfaction with which he read the Ode, has ordered that it be reprinted in an edition *de luxe* by the royal printing office. . . ."

It was now nearly five years since the Duke de Rohan brought Victor Hugo and Lamartine together. They had become friends, and had exchanged odes and letters. On the day following the royal audience Lamartine, who had not been able to go to Rheims, wrote from Chambéry to Victor: "I am very near Mont Blanc. Why don't you come here right away? In August I shall be back in my hut, and it will be very hard for me, as I have already told you, to come up here with you. Whatever you do, spend a week with me at Saint-Point on your way, and I will see you off."

Another highway paved with silver like that on the road to Rheims. The king's favour had worked wonders with the publishers. Urbain Canel ordered Nodier, Taylor, Lamartine, and Victor Hugo to write a *Picturesque and Poetic Journey to Mont Blanc and the Valley of Chamonix*. Lamartine, who had declined to sign the contract, had been offered 2,000 francs for four meditations. Taylor was to receive 2,000 francs for eight drawings. Victor was to have 2,250 francs for four odes and a few pages of prose. Nodier would be paid 2,250 francs for the story of the journey.

Off to Saint-Point. Perhaps they would be able to change Lamartine's mind. Urbain Canel advanced funds to them, and they hired two carriages. With them went Madame Hugo, little Léopoldine who was now ten months old, a nursemaid, Madame Charles Nodier and her daughter Marie, and Julien Gue, a Creole painter from San Domingo. One fine morning in August they moved out of the Fontainebleau gate. Smartly, coachman! and the carriages moved off side by side so that conversation might flow back and forth between them.

They lunched at an inn at Essonne. Farther on, while Victor was walking up the Vermanton hill, he was stopped by two guards who wondered at this schoolboy on holiday wearing the ribbon of the Legion of Honour. Victor looked for

his passport, and discovered that he had left it behind in Paris. But Nodier came to his rescue. Nodier was forty years old and very impressive. "This gentleman," he said with emphasis, "is the famous Victor Hugo." The *gendarmes*, to whom this name doubtless meant nothing, released their prisoner and excused themselves in confusion. Finally they came to Mâcon, where they were met by Lamartine, and to Saint-Point whose restoration Hugo deplored, for he was a fanatical defender of old stones. This English Gothic he despised; but there was, by way of recompense, the sinking sun purpling the horizon and the rich fields of Burgundy. True, there was also Madame de Lamartine, an Englishwoman, who dined in full evening dress. She and her sisters-in-law sat at table in beribboned and low-cut gowns while Madame Hugo and Madame Nodier were conscious of the incongruity of their high-necked frocks.

Two days later they left France behind them in a fog. Suddenly the sun shone, tore apart the clouds, and they witnessed the "dazzling apparition of Mont Blanc and the Alps." Distant memories of Spain and Italy awoke in the poet who was now discovering the mountains for the first time. His memory was ever afterward to be haunted by the Alps: by the demon Nant, the legend of the Green Lake and the Black Mountain, the blocks of granite borne by mules, the great feathery and funereal pines, the wild roaring of the waterfalls, the panorama of glaciers to be seen from the height of Montanvert.

She Did Not Understand

In his preface to the *Nouvelles Odes* Hugo was still undecided as between the classical and the romantic; but, in 1826, he spoke another language. Standing in the gardens of Versailles he announced that he preferred the virgin forest. At the beginning of the year his *Bug-Jargal*, somewhat rewritten, contained the first favourable word on negro art. In October,

with his *Odes et Ballades*, Victor sacrificed to the taste of the day. Eugène Delacroix was making his lithographs for an inferno called *Faust:* witches, ghouls, gnomes, elves, and goblins were driving the Three Graces, Apollo, and the Muses from the studios and from Parnassus. How many frail hearts were to beat uncertainly over the *Knight's Avowal*, and the *Sabbath Dance!* The public applauded, but the press held back; the critics were not merely crabbed but, which is worse, silent.

Early in January 1827 two good articles appeared in the *Globe:* "The thought," said their author, "which lies at the bottom of these compositions is eminently poetic. The ode to a young girl is only twenty lines long, but it is perfect in simplicity and emotion, expressing, as it were, the kindly and melancholy glance with which a man who is suffering responds to the caresses of a child. What skill and agility of rhythm there is in *Trilby* and in the *Sabbath Dance!* And what harmony of style and sustained richness of rhyme!"

Hugo wondered who this so indulgent critic could be? Was it by chance Dubois, who had been so kind to his *Deux Iles?* Dubois acknowledged that it was not he. The author of these two intelligent and eulogistic articles was named Sainte-Beuve. He was twenty-two years old and lived with his mother at 94, rue de Vaugirard.

Next door to Victor! On his way home, Victor rang at number 94, but Monsieur Sainte-Beuve was not in. He left his card. The next day, at luncheon time, Sainte-Beuve was announced. He was a thin, spare, already round-shouldered young man with a long nose, a shifty eye, and an awkward and secretive manner. Before him sat the Hugo family: Adèle, with her pretty round face, her velvety eyes, her Andalusian hair, her straight nose, giving the breast to her third child, plump little Charlot; and Victor, whose beauty charmed every heart, and of whom Saint-Valry said: "Genius in bloom sat upon his wide brow, and something strong, powerful and

inspired was revealed in his least word. I was enchanted, fascinated by so much purity, grace, and imagination allied to a genius so frank and vigorous. Admiration developed in me a feeling of friendship, of enthusiasm almost as lively and passionate as love itself."

They spoke of poetry, and it was Sainte-Beuve's turn to be fascinated. As he thanked the critic of the *Globe*, Victor acquainted him with his views and methods in the art of poetry, with a few of his secrets of rhythm and colour. Sainte-Beuve listened with singular attention, and thereafter began to write verse, of which indeed he never boasted. He himself wrote: "I was quick to seize these new ideas which I now heard for the first time and which threw a great light for me upon style and the fashioning of verse."

"Who wrote that very severe article in the *Globe* upon Monsieur de Vigny's *Cinq-Mars?*"

It was Sainte-Beuve's beautiful neighbour who asked, and he bowed, subjugated: "I must confess that I wrote it, madame."

With that the call was ended. The young man rose awkwardly to his feet, but before he left his glance lingered on the magnificent creature who was not looking at him and who, as the inspiration of her husband's verse, had her discreet and flattering part in Sainte-Beuve's article: "Imagine as well as you can all that is most pure in love, most chaste in marriage, most sacred in the union of two souls under the eye of God; imagine, in a word, voluptuousness ravished from heaven under the wing of prayer, and you will still have imagined nothing which is not surpassed and obliterated by Monsieur Hugo in the poems entitled *Encore à toi* and *Son nom.* To quote them is almost already to tarnish their delicate modesty." Later, in his *Volupté*, Sainte-Beuve wrote of this first meeting: "I am afraid, my friend, to tell you about Madame de Couaën, who seemed to me when I saw her in the course of that first visit, and of later visits, really very beautiful, in one of those rare, foreign ways to which our eyes need to grow accustomed." And

in the *Livre d'amour*, after describing Adèle, he wrote: "And my choice was swift, and my destiny at hand."

The Ode to the Column

"Let time do its work. The child is of his mother's opinion; the man will be of his father's mind."

General Hugo's prophecy came true. Bonaparte had ceased to appear to Sophie's son a usurper without *even military* genius. He had become Napoleon; and although the singer of the *Coronation Ode* remained faithful to the Bourbons, he could permit no doubt to be cast upon French glory, even be it the glory of the tri-colour. But doubt was cast upon it.

The Treaty of Paris of 1814 had abolished all the nobiliary titles created by Napoleon which had constituted feudal rights over Austrian towns or provinces. Nobody had yet thought of applying this clause when suddenly, in January 1827, at a reception held by Apponyi, the Austrian ambassador, the scandal burst forth. Marshal Soult arrived.

"Whom shall I announce?" asked the lackey.

"The Duke de Dalmatie," answered the marshal.

"Marshal Soult," announced the lackey, who had been taught his lesson.

The next to appear was Marshal Mortier.

"Whom shall I announce?" the lackey asked.

"The Duke de Trévise," was the reply.

"Marshal Mortier," the lackey announced.

The two old companions of the Emperor looked questioningly at one another. Could there be some mistake?

Marshal Oudinot appeared.

"Whom shall I announce?"

"The Duke de Reggio."

"Marshal Oudinot," announced the lackey.

Clearly, there was no mistake. The three marshals took counsel and left the room, followed by the other marshals of the Empire. The France of the Revolution, the France of

Napoleon, had been slapped in the face. Who was to avenge France?

The poet! The singer of the coronation! In the face of the Austrian affront, Brutus's son felt that he was no longer a Vendean, but a Frenchman. How was he to remain silent, to submit to such outrage, he whose wings had sprouted in the shadow of the *Grande Armée*, who had grown up in the wake of French victories in Italy and Spain? Napoleon had found a poet of his own stature. Austerlitz, Eylau, Wagram, and Waterloo would live again their heroic life.

The Ode was published in the *Débats*, and Victor received an immense ovation while the foreigner threatened and ground his teeth and the extremists of the Bourbon party raged and shouted "traitor." Victor Hugo and France changed their emblem. The white banner faded. In the spring of 1827 the sky was tri-coloured.

Shakespeare and Delacroix

For some weeks past the young artists of the romantic school had been preparing feverishly and furiously their Salon, the Salon of 1827, which was to open on the fourth of November. In this Salon, the *Birth of Henri IV* and *Sardanapalus* were first seen. "All painting is in the air for the fourth of November," wrote Delacroix to Poterlet on August 8, "and everybody who owns a palette is rushing to be there on time. There aren't models enough to go round and the paint dealers are smiling with pleasure at this Bacchic fury."

It was not only the *ateliers* which were animated by this *Bacchic fury*. It was not only Decamps, Saint-Evre, Champmartin, Ary Scheffer, Louis Boulanger, Eugène Devéria, and Delacroix who were polishing their arms. Standing fraternally beside the painters and sculptors were the poets and musicians, also prepared to rush into battle against the "established order." Conceived in the time of the Napoleonic wars, these *enfants du siècle* claimed their share of conquest. They were

about to conquer the Salon, the theatre, all the resounding platforms, and in the end the public squares.

On the sixth of September, 1827, Shakespeare finally triumphed at the *Odéon.* He was no longer a "lieutenant of the victory of Waterloo." The English troupe had been acclaimed. On the eleventh of September, Victor Hugo, a young god about to launch his thunderbolt, the celebrated Preface to *Cromwell,* went to the *Odéon,* where Kemble and Miss Smithson were playing *Hamlet.* There he met Vigny, Dumas, Gérard de Nerval, Delacroix, and Berlioz (*Death and Fury!*). The last-named had just been led by Miss Smithson into the discovery of Juliet and Ophelia, and music was to remember the thunderbolt that flew from this hand. Here in the atmosphere of battle, on this tumultuous battle front where the captains of romanticism acclaimed Othello, Hamlet, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet, and King Lear, in this *foyer* of enthusiasm and revolt, here rather than at the Devérias' the greatest of French poets gained the friendship of the greatest of French painters. Here the two chiefs of the Romantic School, Eugène Delacroix and Victor Hugo learned in the heat of their most beautiful illusions to know, to esteem, and to love one another. Some months later, at the first performance of *Amy Robsart,* Delacroix grew reminiscent about these great hours of romanticism: "Well," he said; "it was a general invasion. Hamlet picked up his grinning skull; Othello sharpened his essentially murderous and subversive dagger; Lear came forward to tear out his eyes before the French public. It would be worthy of the Academy to declare every importation of this kind incompatible with public morality. And farewell to good taste! Meanwhile, you want to wear a stout coat of mail under your clothes. Beware of classical daggers; or better, immolate yourselves bravely for the greater pleasure of us barbarians. . . ."

The painters were equally avid with the poets and musicians to conquer the theatre, and they set about designing models of settings and costumes. One reason was that they wished to lend to the plays of Dumas, Hugo, and Vigny the local colour

that belonged to them. Delacroix set the example by following Hugo's indications concerning the dress of each character. He made himself a costumer and dressed magnificently the characters of *Amy Robsart*, a play sketched out by Soumet and finished by Victor Hugo and Paul Foucher. Performed at the *Odéon*, the play crumpled under the hisses with which it was greeted.

"I send you," wrote Delacroix to Hugo, "almost all the costumes in question. The cutter may now put his scissors into the cloth. He won't understand what he is about, but it doesn't matter since I shall be on hand to clear up the obscurities. . . . We shall probably have difficulty in obtaining certain things. I'll wait, to get those, for *Cromwell* or some other fruit wholly of your own blood and entrails."

At about the same time Victor was writing to his friend Pavie in defence of the *Death of Sardanapalus* which had been called by some the death of the romantics: "As concerns great paintings, do not believe those stupid newspaper critics who say that Delacroix has failed. His *Sardanapalus* is a thing so magnificent and so gigantic that it escapes their myopic eyes. . . ."

A READING AT THE ARSENAL

One Sunday in October Bonington, the Ariel of romantic painting, and his friend Delacroix, who had finished *Sardanapalus*, accompanied by Champmartin, the Devérias, Louis Boulanger, David d'Angers, and those other intimates of the rue de l'Ouest and the rue de Vaugirard—Alfred de Musset, Mérimée, Saint-Valry, Alexandre Dumas, Emile and Antony Deschamps, and Sainte-Beuve, went to Vanves to enjoy the air of the last fine days, eat cakes at the *Moulin au Beurre*, and listen to "the vague violins of mother Saguet." There, under an arbour with Julie Duvidal de Montferrier, his charming *fiancée*, they came upon Abel Hugo.

"What is Victor up to?"

"Nobody has seen him in days."

"He is deserting us."

Abel answered: "You can see him at the Arsenal to-night. He will have finished his Preface to *Cromwell* this evening."

Cromwell, which had been ordered by the great actor, Talma, did not specially interest these romantics. What they were curious about was the preface, in which they knew the young captain was to send forth his war cry. That evening they all turned up at Nodier's.

Saint-Valry and Dumas being the tallest, they lighted the candles. These two had no need to mount on chairs to do it. Madame Nodier and Marie smiled with satisfaction, surrounded by the white wainscoting, the painting of *Henri IV as a Child*, by Boso, and Paulin Guérin's portrait of Nodier. Taylor and Cailleux, followed by Nodier, were coming out of the dining room, where their host had lingered. An armchair covered with red cashmere awaited him by the fireside in which were crackling the first autumn logs. The familiars of the household came in: Fontaney and Alfred Johannot, ever solemn in the midst of the general gaiety; Tony Johannot, who was finishing a water-colour for Marie's album; Felix Arvers, who carried a sonnet of love for Marie in his heart throughout his life; Barye, a neighbour; Boulanger, painter and poet; Francisque Michel, a bookworm so absent-minded that he arrived in yellow slippers and a felt hat of the time of Louis XIII; and the grave brothers Deschamps. Monsieur de Vigny arrived escorting Madame Gay and Delphine, the latter radiating blonde beauty beside Marie's piquant ugliness. Madame Victor Hugo had not been able to come: she was nursing her mother, who was very ill. But here were the Devérias, Laure dazzling, covered with flowers even to her hair piled high in Chinese fashion. And here was Sainte-Beuve.

"Oh, yes, Victor is coming."

While waiting for Victor and his preface, Vigny declaimed his *Cor*, and the beautiful Delphine, with her eyes constantly on the noble count, also read a poem. In a window seat near

the piano where Marie was to be found, sat the child Musset, musing upon his *Contes d'Espagne*. Nodier had just told them, with his extraordinary gift for story-telling, a tale of a conspiracy under the Reign of Terror. Dumas had frightened the ladies by recounting the tale of the woman "married though dead." And still Victor had not come.

Marie began to play a dance. The chairs were moved against the walls and the dancers stood in position. Those who preferred chatting to Marie slipped into the window seat. Those who were playing games were shunted off into corners. The dance began and went on interminably, and still Victor was not there. Madame Nodier began to fret, for her husband went habitually to bed early.

At last, a tumult of doors thrown open. A young man with a vast forehead, deep eyes, and sinuous lips—it must be Victor Hugo! The dancing ceased. Chairs and sofas reappeared. Victor rustled his sheets of paper. He took place beside the chimney where two candles threw their glow upon him. In a slow and cadenced voice he began:

"The drama which follows has nothing to recommend it to the benevolence of the public. . . ."

Necks stretched and eyes shone. Hands beat, interrupting the reading with applause. And suddenly an inconceivable enthusiasm:

"Ogive!" cried Louis Boulanger.

"Cathedral," murmured Vigny.

"Egyptian pyramid!" roared Alexandre Dumas.

"Let us," Victor concluded, "smash into bits all theories, prosodies, and systems. Let us tear down this old plaster which covers the façade of art. There are neither rules nor models. . . ."

Wedding and Funeral

"Life is a perpetual encounter of wedding parties and funeral processions."

Wedding and Funeral

In December, shortly after the death of Madame Foucher, Abel married Julie Duvidal, the sister of Duvidal de Montferrier of the light-horse brigade, who was to furnish Victor with a model for Captain Phoebus in *Notre-Dame de Paris*. This dark and witty Julie, with her cherry mouth and almond eyes, had been Adèle's drawing mistress and confidante. A poem written long afterward seems to hint that Victor's heart might for an instant have beaten for her.

This time, General Hugo being on excellent terms with his sons, the father attended the son's wedding. It was to Léopold-Sigisbert that Victor had dedicated *Cromwell*, and it was with Abel, in the rue Plumet, that the general and his wife came to live; without however giving up their house at Blois. The rue Plumet, incidentally, was to be the scene of the idyllic love of Marius and Cosette, in *les Misérables*.

It was a time of happiness. The beloved pupil of Baron Gérard (who left such delightful sketches of her) painted with a vigorous brush a high-coloured, truculent portrait of the kindly general, which resembles the canvases of Gros or Goya rather than the school of David. Like her master, who was the patron of Bonington and Delacroix, Julie deserted the classical cause and went over to the camp of the romantics. Meanwhile, Victor and Adèle had been living since April 1827 in the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, in a small house set back from the street at the end of a path lined with trees. Behind the house was a garden planted with false ebony trees whose branches reached to the windows of their apartment.

A curious coincidence: When the young couple left the rue de Vaugirard, Monsieur Sainte-Beuve left it too; and he too hastened to take a flat in the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs. Victor and Adèle lived at number 11; he at 19; and when they met again the first time he said with a pallid smile: "We are still neighbours I see." As he had no friends, Victor gave him his; and as he had no hearth, Victor gave him his.

Before this hearth the old general, his great flushed cheeks trembling with pleasure, saw again the two beautiful children

so charmingly sketched by the Devérias and by Louis Boulanger —pretty, grave Léopoldine, so adorable in her long pantaloons, and Charlot, a turbulent little imp.

Victor, like his Marius, went almost every evening to the rue Plumet; and he too went somewhat for reasons of love, for the love of a kind and heroic father from whom life had separated him too long. They would talk endlessly together about the Revolution, the struggles for freedom, the epic of the Empire, and Napoleon. Truly, Victor no longer felt himself a Vendean. But as a passionate lover of glory, he burned at the thought that at his age Bonaparte had set out to conquer the world. Had he not too a world to conquer?

On the evening of the twenty-eighth of January, 1828, after their early dinner, Victor and Adèle went to call on the general. Never had Léopold-Sigisbert been more jovial, more wide awake. They chatted until eleven o'clock, and then the young couple went back to the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs. Victor had scarcely time to undress before there was a frightening insistent pulling at the door bell. He rushed forward, opened the door, and saw there a man he did not know.

"What is it you wish?"

"I have come from Countess Hugo to say that your father has died."

The general had died like a soldier, on his feet, struck by apoplexy as by a bullet. This father was never to be forgotten by his son. In the dedication of his *Voix intérieures*, Victor protested against the omission of this glorious name on the *Arc de Triomphe:*

> Seeing this wall sublime I regret
> Only Phidias absent and my father forgotten.

His father, the "hero with the kindly smile," was to illuminate with his kindness and humanity the tenebrous and blood-stained frescoes of the *Légende des siècles*. And in the *Année terrible*, while the body of the mutilated homeland bled at those two

wounds, Alsace and Lorraine, the annunciator of just revenge was to evoke the example of his father as a reason why we should not despair:

> As a child I saw one who was great,
> My father. . . .

Orientales

Eighteen hundred twenty-seven was the year of *Cromwell*, of the romantic salon, of Navarin, "the town with painted houses." It was the year of Byron, Fabvier, *Scio*, *Missolonghi*, Delacroix, Chateaubriand, Ali Pasha, *Canaris*. Despite the prudence and shrewdness of Villèle, the king's Gascon minister, the heart of France beat for Greece. One was not a romantic if one was not a philhellene. Hugo's *Orientales* appeared triumphantly in January 1829, and the ode called *Fire from Heaven—le Feu du ciel*, was on everybody's lips. But it was above all *Canaris, l'Enfant*, and the *Têtes du sérail*, that made romantic France tremble and shudder. Yet, the *Orientales* were more than mere war cries or funeral chants: they were filled with the languid posturings of odalisques and the voluptuous nudity of sultanas glimpsed beneath palm and cypress in the moonlight. Such, for example, were the poems entitled *Sara la baigneuse* and the *Sultane favorite*. Not Greece nor Turkey, but all the orientalism painted with burning palettes by Decamps and Delacroix was in the *Orientales;* and the Arabia revealed to Hugo by Ernest Fouinet lived in the nostalgic verses of *Nourmahal la rousse* and the *Adieux de l'hôtesse arabe*. But it was above all Spain, Moorish and Mozarabic Spain, where Africa and Asia mix their delicious poisons, the Spain of death and voluptuousness, of which Victor wrote. And the Spain, too, of the *novios*, the guitars, and the *seguidillas*.

In the East, General Hugo's son found himself face to face with a colossal shade: He, "always He, everywhere." It was

of Him he thought when writing *Cromwell.* It was He whom he saw on the sands of Egypt and under the Syrian cedars:

> Ever Napoleon, dazzling and somber,
> Standing on the threshold of the century.

There is another sovereignty, which is that of genius, and our inspired poet, like Buonaberdi and like Mazeppa, will bear the sceptre and wear the crown. But, like Bonaparte at the same age, this young conqueror bears a great love in his heart; and in the last pages of this dazzling collection of poems, his hand clasped in the hand of the beloved, he softens, and his soul is flooded with tenderness. Already these pages herald the intimate poetry of the *Feuilles d'Automne* which he is later to write.

Henri III and His Court

On an evening in February 1829, romanticism undertook to wage its first battle in the *Comédie Française.* All the conspirators were present: Vigny, Hugo, Berlioz, Delacroix, at their head. The romantic paraphernalia of air-canes, pea-shooters, slashed jerkins, Spanish royal-guard uniforms, and the witchery of Come Ruggieri, ravished and enchanted these young men in inferno-red and smoke coloured coats, accompanied by pretty, swan-necked young women with sloping shoulders, wasp-like waists, and hair bound under velvet turbans or worn *à la girafe.*

For Saint-Mégrin's sake, the eyes of all Paris were on the Duchess de Guise. The audience shuddered frenetically, trembled, palpitated at the thought of the iron-gauntleted hand of the Duke de Guise bruising her arm as he forced her to write the letter which was to deprive her of her lover. Saint-Mégrin's passion and the passion of the unfortunate duchess tortured and tormented the entire theatre. Down with the classics! Down with Baour-Lormian, Brifaut, Jouy, Arnault, Népomucène Lemercier; down with *Mahomet II, Ninus II, Bélisaire,*

Régulus, Clovis! Down with Bis's *Attila,* to hear which was never again to cry "bis" nor "bravo"!

When the fourth act was ended the theatre was in an uproar. The public could not withstand the whirlpool into which it was drawn. Hearts beat like drums; punch-flame wigs palpitated in the wind of glory. In a stage box the Duchess de Langeais was swooning, brutalised by the young mulatto who had planted the red flag of romanticism on the boards of Thalia. Leaning far out of her box, Madame Malibran had to hold fast with both hands to a column in order not to topple over. When Dumas appeared in the theatre surrounded by his satellites, the audience went mad. Slender and very tall, the worthy negro with the thick-lipped smile was radiant. He held his head so high that it seemed his long, uncombed hair would catch fire in the high-hung chandeliers. This was the breaker of idols who was to win the next day from Gentil a roaring cry: "We know now that Racine was nothing but a rascal!"

The curtain fell on the death of Saint-Mégrin. When the last applause had died away, Dumas, swept off on the flood of his followers, found himself in the *foyer:*

"Right, Devéria; I'll pose for you without fail. . . . Dear Delacroix, I shall be calling on you tomorrow on the quai Voltaire. How are you, Vigny? Hugo! Ah, I am one of you at last!"

Victor held out his hand, and these two loyal souls embraced. But a gleam shone in the tiger-yellow eyes of the blond poet:

"Now," he said, "it is my turn."

"Don't forget me when the time comes."

"You shall be there at the first reading."

"You promise?"

"Absolutely."

The next day Victor sat stoking his log fire dreamily. Adèle let her beautiful sleepy dark eyes rest upon him.

"You haven't said a word, Victor. What are you thinking about?"

"I am thinking of a drama in verse which I shall call. . . . I have the play in my head, but I can't make up my mind about the title."

"The title?"

"Either *A Duel under Richelieu* or *Marion de Lorme*."

Death to the Death Penalty!

Ever since 1820, when Louvel had been executed, Victor Hugo had been haunted by the guillotine. He met that terrible shrew on every hand. One day, Jules Lefèvre dragged him off to the Place de Grève.

"What is going on?"

"They are about to cut off the hand and the head of Jean Martin, who murdered his father."

On the Place de Grève a huge crowd swarmed, chattered, and sang. What gaiety, and what heat! People were crushed, and laughed. The windows about were black with men and women, for all the neighbours had invited their friends to the celebration, and they stood gazing, eating purple grapes, and drinking. Here and there windows had been let out at steep prices, and Victor could see, leaning on the sills, pretty young women lightly clothed in organdie, embroidered muslin, and silky gauze, drinking champagne and laughing joyously, while young men fluttered about them. Suddenly coquetry gave place to a livelier pleasure. The crowd swayed and undulated like a field of ripe wheat in a wind. With one voice, in one cry, it shouted: "The cart!"

The sky darkened. Drops spattered. His back turned to the horse, the executioner, and his aids, a black veil over his head, wearing only a white skirt and trousers of coarse grey cloth, the condemned man was shivering, under the increasing downpour. Through the black veil he was kissing the crucifix put to his lips by abbé Montès, the prison chaplain.

From its first interview with Victor Hugo, the guillotine smelled an enemy; it let itself be seen by him only in profile,

where it looked reassuringly like a simple red post. The vast circle formed by the crowd about the scaffolding was broken by the entry of the cart. Supported by the headsman's aids, the parricide stepped down, and then mounted the steps. Behind him walked the chaplain with his crucifix and the clerk with his sentence, which he was reading in a loud voice. Silence had fallen upon the crowd. In the windows, the laughter froze. The headsman tore off the cloth with a sweeping gesture and all that blackness was replaced by a livid, haggard face of wax. The man's right hand was chained to the post. An axe flashed in the air. Victor Hugo could look no more; he turned his head; he lowered his head. "Ah!" screamed the mob at last. The victim had stopped suffering. Only then did the poet feel his self-possession return.

Clearly, the death penalty would not allow itself to be forgotten. Another day the cart brought out a highwayman named Delporte, an old man whose bald head gleamed in the sun. A third time there was a double execution: Malagutti and Ratta, who had murdered Joseph the money-changer. Ratta was pale and covered with gooseflesh; Malagutti went to his death as if to dinner. The show might have become monotonous in the end, but chance arranged things in its excellent way. In 1828, as the author of *Cromwell* was crossing the Place de Grève (now de l'Hôtel-de-Ville), an astonishing sight stopped him in his tracks. The guillotine stood there, its thirst quenched. The headsman, talking to the idlers who stood about, was rehearsing last night's performance for them. But the knife would not move. They greased the slots and tried again: it worked perfectly, and the knife glowed with satisfaction like a full moon. This rehearsal seemed to Victor Hugo as odious as the thing itself:

"Ah," he thought, "to think of this man making ready to kill another man, doing it in the light of day, in public, while a hopeless and miserable being is struggling in prison, mad with rage, or letting them tie him down, inert and numb with terror. Death to the death penalty, I say!"

The next day he took a sheet of paper and began to write the last day of a condemned man—*le Dernier jour d'un condamné.*

In the Room of the Golden Lily

"Right, Victor. To-day is the ninth of July. On Friday, the seventeenth, I shall read you *Othello.*"

"Good old Alfred! You'll come. We'll give up this evening to *Marion.*"

In the room of the golden lily, in the long-haired and bearded crush of men representing Young France, stood a nobleman perfectly turned out: black evening dress, black cravat, white waistcoat, curved waist, with pale and regular features, thin lips, a slightly aquiline nose, and grey-blue eyes under a broad forehead framed in blond hair. It was Count Alfred de Vigny. He was leaning over a charming boy with a cherubic face, fashionably but somewhat exaggeratedly dressed in a crow-black skirted coat, a velvet collar curved full down to his waist, and skin-tight silken willow green trousers. The boy was Alfred de Musset.

Through the open windows the garden sent in its perfumed night air. A rain of stars dropped through the thick greenery of the acacias. The moon played with the water slumbering in the fountain and the blue shadow of the elms smothered the voluptuous moaning of the night-birds. In the room of the golden lily, between the Caravaggio and Louis Boulanger's *Feu du ciel,* in the glow of the feverish candles, the young insurgents clustered about Madame Hugo, who sat there so beautiful with her broad brow circled by English braids, her shoulders sloping, her head high on her proud throat, her mouth small and endearing, and her Andalusian eyes. That solid lad who still kept his figure, although he was already gap-toothed, whose golden eyes were filled with laughter, whose colour was so high and genius so lively, and who sought to appear fashionable in his blue-bottle coat and black waistcoat,



Painting by Louis Boulanger.

LEOPOLDINE HUGO

was the author of the *Chouans*, Monsieur de Balzac. Beside him stood Eugène Delacroix, a slender dandy with a beardless face, the olive complexion of a young Indian god, his eyes burning and half shut, his chin brutal and obstinate. Delacroix's friend Mérimée was there, full of discreet and imperceptible mockery, sniffing his game, his mouth stretched like a bow ready to let off its arrow of sarcasm. There was Alexandre Dumas, his skin looking darker and his hair more crinkly than ever, grown taller since his *Henri III*. Near by stood Frédéric Soulié, a lion in love, careful of his broad Ariège accent; Achille Devéria, looking more like a cavalryman than a painter; Eugène Devéria, with the air of a Castilian grandee; Louis Boulanger, with the pretty phiz of a round-eyed, dreamy cat; Alexandre Soumet, as handsome as Apollo; Madame Amable Tastu, the muse with the charming smile whose friendship with the painter of Joséphine Bonaparte had left her with something of the silvery grace of Prud'hon; and not far from Antony, Emile Deschamps, black haired, dressed up to the nines in a light-blue coat, with a red ribbon in his buttonhole.

And there was Madame Belloc, there was Villemain, Armand and Edouard Bertin, Baron Taylor, Charles Magnin, Turquety, and, in a shadowy corner, a scant little silhouette, a Churchman's face, a long ferrety nose, shifty eyes which admire in public and are jealous in secret—there was Sainte-Beuve. Nodier had not been able to come. He was too ill to go out of doors in the evening. David d'Angers, who had been obliged to leave for Weimar, and Monsieur de Lamartine, who had gone back to Saint-Point, were also missing.

The gay tumult subsided. In a full, deep, caressing, and pathetic voice, Victor Hugo began his reading of *Marion de Lorme*. Didier, the orphaned soul of honour; Marion, the courtesan redeemed by love; Saverny, the charming giddy-brained fellow; the odious Laffémas, the noble Nangis, l'Angély, the sinister buffoon, and the weak-willed Louis XIII—into them all Hugo breathed life until they palpitated with a prodigious

existence. Each line was interrupted by applause and admiring exclamations; nothing wearied these young and excited beings.

It was very curious to see Dumas. The first act transported and saddened him. He felt the distance that separated him from this magical art, and he suffered. But since this worthy negro's heart ruled the rest of him, enthusiasm swept away envy, he was the prey of a nameless exaltation, and his long arms gesticulated. When Hugo had finished he seized the poet and picked him up with Herculean strength as the general, his father, the Horatius Cocles of the Tyrol, had been used to do with his soldiers, and said, setting him down again: "Hugo, you will make us all famous."

The ladies served sherbets and iced orangeade, and gigantic Dumas, stuffing himself with cakes repeated with his mouth full: "Admirable! admirable!" The gaiety which followed the lugubrious drama continued until two in the morning. Dumas and Sainte-Beuve were the last to leave.

"Hugo," said Dumas; "I beg you to pardon Marion. Didier goes to his death in the fifth act without forgiving her. I know how stern is your sense of virtue, but I beg you to think of the public and be human."

Hugo glanced at Sainte-Beuve. "What do you say, Sainte-Beuve?" he asked.

"I agree with Dumas. I vote for pardon," he replied, lowering his heavy lids over his glaucous eyes.

The proud, virile face was motionless. Victor Hugo was meditating. Then with a sweeping gesture, he sent his friends home.

"So be it!" he said. "Since you wish it, I shall pardon her."

At Saint-Cloud

At nine o'clock the next morning Baron Taylor came running to the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs.

"I was not able to speak to you last night," he said to

Hugo; "but it goes without saying that I must have *Marion de Lorme* for the *Comédie Française*. I am the first who ever asked you to write a play; therefore, this play is mine. Besides, *Marion* can only be played by Mademoiselle Mars. Do you agree?"

"I agree."

All Paris heard that Victor Hugo had written a masterpiece, and Taylor was not the only manager burning to produce *Marion de Lorme*. He was followed in the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs by Jousselin de Lasalle, of the *Porte-Saint-Martin* theatre, who offered to give the rôle of Didier to Frederick Lemaître. Then came Harel, of the *Odéon*, who tried by main strength to obtain the manuscript, so that Hugo had great trouble tearing it out of his hands.

At the *Comédie Française* the play was read with equal success. But Taylor feared the royal censorship, and with cause. *Anastasie* eventually forbade its performance. Hugo ran to the Minister for Home Affairs. But the Viscount de Martignac, with all his liberality and friendship for the theatre (he had himself at one time founded a company of players), knew that his days were numbered. He was Premier, but discredited. How could he undertake to defend a fourth act which condemned royalty with such severity? His voice, ordinarily mild and weary, "like that of a man to whom women have imparted some of their fascination and their frailty," became stern and icy. If he was to be believed, every one would recognise Charles X in the priest-ridden huntsman, Louis XIII. However much Victor might protest, Martignac held firmly to his point of view: "Royalty to-day is attacked on every side. I shall speak in favour of interdiction, and if the decision devolves upon me, your drama will not be performed."

But Victor Hugo was not so quickly muzzled. Martignac's words made the round of the romantic *Cénacle* and were received with indignation. This meant the end of troubadour romanticism, the end of rose-water romanticism. Compare its

progress to the Revolution: Chauteubriand had been its Constituent Assembly; Nodier and Lamartine were its Girondins; under the dictatorship of Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas we were to have the Convention. Romanticism, which had in the beginning been monarchistic and Catholic, was now to reveal itself revolutionary and anarchistic at bottom. Yet the author of *Marion de Lorme* remained loyal to the throne. He appealed from the decisions of censors and ministers to the king himself. The king was at Saint-Cloud, where he accorded him an audience. Charles X ought to have been in a gay mood: he had just dismissed Martignac. Yet "Galaor" in his "green, purple-edged uniform" looked very sad, very weary, very like the Louis XIII of *Marion de Lorme:* "a white-headed old man bent with the weight of years and of monarchy."

"May I look forward to a prompt reply?" the poet asked as he was leaving.

"Rest easy," promised Charles X; "I shall press the matter. I admire your talent greatly, Monsieur Hugo. For me there are only two poets, you and Désangiers."

Several days later the new Minister for Home Affairs, Monsieur de la Bourdonnaye, sent for Hugo.

"Monsieur Hugo," he said; "the censorship finds that it cannot allow your drama to be performed; but the Government has in mind some recompense for you."

The next day, while Hugo was chatting with Sainte-Beuve, his bell rang. There was delivered to him a letter from the minister in which Monsieur de la Bourdonnaye announced to Victor Hugo that the king had granted him a new pension of four thousand francs. Adèle appeared, and Sainte-Beuve stepped back.

"The man at the door asks if there is an answer?"

"He shan't wait long," said Victor. "Adèle, bring me the ink."

He wrote:

"My lord: Six years ago the late king deigned, by royal command, to order that I and my noble friend Monsieur de

Lamartine each receive a pension of two thousand francs out of the literary fund of the Ministry for Home Affairs. I accepted that pension with the more gratitude for the fact that I had not solicited it.

"My lord, that pension, modest as it is, suffices me. It is quite true that, living by my pen, I was obliged to count upon the legitimate product of my drama, *Marion de Lorme*. But since the performance of this play, despite that it is a work of conscience, honesty, and art, appears dangerous, I bow in the hope that the august will may change in this respect. I asked that my play be performed; and I asked for nothing else.

"Will you therefore, my lord, be good enough to say to the king that I beg him to permit me to remain in the position in which this latest expression of his kindness finds me. It is scarcely necessary for me to assure you again that whatever may happen, no hostility will come from me. The king may expect of Victor Hugo nothing but the evidence of fidelity, loyalty, and devotion.

"I desire, my lord, that your Excellency place this letter before the king with the homage of my lively gratitude and my profound respect, and I have the honour to be, my lord, your Excellency's very obedient and very humble servant. . . ."

Before sealing the letter, Hugo held it out to his friend.

"I was sure of it!" said Sainte-Beuve.

The next day the *Constitutionnel* cried: "Youth is not as easily corrupted as the ministers hope!"

THE CHIEF

Since his *Marion* had been strangled, Hugo made himself chief of his band. In September he wrote *Hernani*, sub-entitled *Castilian Honour*. The proscribed Hernani was Hugo censured, and the dark-eyed doña Sol was the tender and high-souled Adèle. All the admirable love passages of *Hernani* are addressed to her. Read on the first of October, *Hernani* was

cast on the spot. All Paris knew that *Marion* had been censored; all Paris awaited *Hernani*. Crowds stood before Aubert's windows and Martinet's to see Devéria's lithograph of Victor Hugo. Here was no longer the graceful, feminine Victor Hugo of 1827 or 1828. In this rebellious face everything spoke of audacity, tenacity, and strength. This was in truth *Hernani*, the bandit chief. But the strength was an inner strength, the audacity was dissembled. Let one of the bandits speak—Théophile Gautier, the red-waistcoated dauber, bravo, and poet:

"What struck one at first in Victor Hugo was the truly monumental forehead which crowned, like a pediment of white marble, his gravely placid face. . . . It was really superhuman in beauty and breadth. The vastest thoughts might be written upon it; wreathes of gold and laurel might be worn by it as by the brow of a god or a Cæsar. It was marked with the sign of power. Light auburn hair framed it and fell away from it, a trifle long. He wore no mustache, no beard, neither sideburns nor royal, and his carefully shaved face was peculiarly pale, pierced and illuminated by two yellowish eyes like the eyes of an eagle. His lips curved sinuously and drooped at the corners, but they were firm and determined, and when they parted in a smile one saw that his teeth were brilliantly white. He wore a black skirted coat, grey trousers, and a shirt open slightly at the neck with a small collar. His dress was always sober and marked by breeding; never, in this perfect gentleman, would one have suspected the chief of the wild-haired, bearded band who were the terror of the smooth-chinned *bourgeoisie*."

The Bandits

The chief knew himself threatened and was recruiting his band. Even before his drama saw the footlights it was parodied in the salons and at the *Vaudeville* theatre. The Bourbons were alarmed, and their journal, the *Débats*, sought to reas-

sure them; "However much importance may be attached to the performance of *Hernani* in the republic of letters, the French monarchy need not be disquieted." For his supreme attack upon the hydra of classicism, Hugo recruited with Guttinguer at Rouen, with Victor Pavie at Angers, with Aloysius Bertrand and Louis Boulanger at Dijon; but, in 1830, it was most of all in the *ateliers* of Paris that he found his strongest and most active followers.

Meanwhile, the troops on the classical side were numerous and well disciplined, and Taylor was not at all easy in his mind. The chief of the *claque*—the paid applauders—was devoted to the academic party. Abolish the *claque*, then! It was youth, the youth of the *ateliers* and the schools, who heard the horn that Hugo wound. Youth filled the stalls, the upper galleries, and the pit. The army of romanticism, like Napoleon's Army of Italy, was composed of youth. Most of the soldiers had not yet attained their majority, and the oldest of them, the commander-in-chief, was only twenty-eight. That had been Bonaparte's age, and was now Hugo's.

Gérard de Nerval (who had recently made a melodrama of *Han d'Islande*) was beside himself. This frenzied young captain broke into Rioult's *atelier*, where he found a long-haired, pale-faced dauber—Théophile Gautier. An immense shout greeted them as they embraced, and in a moment Rioult's was emptied of students.

"To Lethière's!"

There, in the studio of his former master, the last disciple of the classical school of David, Eugène Devéria reigned in his Rubens hat and Velazquez cape. Lethière vanished with a feeble smile. A slender, fashionably dressed young pupil, draped in an immense cloak, dropped his brush and rushed upon a *Vénus de Médicis*. Seizing this plaster cast, he threw it into the street, and all the other copies of antiques followed it in bits. Then the young barbarians clattered with an infernal noise down the stairs. They ran to Hersent's, to Picot's, to Labrousse's, to Duban's, singing, shouting, bantering, and

threatening. The good folk of the quarter grew fearful, and though the police frowned, one did not arrest youth!

Gérard, Pétrus Borel, and Gautier divided their troops into fourteen tribes. Young France and the ragged Republicans received squares of red paper bearing in the master's hand this one word—*Hierro*. Hierro, in the sixth *Orientale*, is the war cry of the Almogavares. "Warriors, to war!" Gérard's bands had exactly the picturesque and rakish appearance of the Almogavares of Spain.

"Gautier, are you sure of your men?"

"By the skull out of which Byron drank at Newstead Abbey, I answer for every one of them!" And looking round he asked: "Am I right?"

One hundred open throats shouted in unison: "Death to the mossbacks!"

Besides the Devérias, the Johannots, Nerval, and Gautier, there was Célestin Nanteuil, a lad who looked like those players on the sambuke under the eaves of cathedrals; Joseph Bouchardy, called *Salpeter-Heart*, who seemed to be in disguise in a blue, gold-buttoned coat and grey and black-chequered trousers and waistcoat, like those worn by the dispossessed Indian princes to be seen strolling with a melancholy air through the streets of London; the sculptor Jean Du Seigneur, who felt sorry for himself because of his "lily and rose" complexion at a time when every romantic desired to be pale, livid, greenish, a bit corpse-like, and who wore in the place of a waistcoat a jerkin of black velvet cut in a point and laced behind—a jerkin which Gautier took as the model of the costume he wore at *Hernani;* the architect Jules Vabre, the "miraculous companion" of the Lycanthropus who lived in the depths of a cellar, and who, by way of imitating *Han d'Islande*, drank sea water out of the skull of a girl who had died of tuberculosis; Auguste Maquet, who was then calling himself Augustus Mac Keat; Philotée O'Neddy, the blond negro who dreamed of his *Feu et flamme* in moments when he was not in torment; Achille Roche, who was to drown himself in the Tiber;

Français, who would paint academic landscapes; Jean Gigoux; Paul Huet; Préault, the vigorous sculptor whose cruel witticisms were already making the round of Paris; Cabat of Honfleur; and Berlioz, called Father Joy (Hell and Damnation!), who was to violate Fame between two attempted suicides.

It was freezing hard: the Seine had been solid ice for a month. Victor Hugo wore overshoes to the theatre in order not to break his legs while crossing the bridges. There the actors shivered, their lines freezing on their lips. Men and women walked muffled up to the eyes in the streets. But the bandits ignored the wind; so much did they leap about, wax indignant, or grow delirious with enthusiasm that winter fled before them like an old academic saw.

"Look well at us," cried Philotée O'Neddy to the Philistines who stared in fright. "We are the brigands of thought."

"The savages of art!" shouted Préault.

Eighteen hundred thirty! The horn of *Hernani* foretold the *Marseillaise of the Barricades.*

The Hornet in the Hive

The *hive* in the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs was the workroom. There was a hornet in the hive, a worm in the fruit.

For the hundredth time, thinking half a loaf better than no bread, Sainte-Beuve, reduced to the rôle of a minor secretary, had written the following note:

"Monsieur Victor Hugo, who is overwhelmed by his many tasks, has asked me to reply to you for him. He was extremely touched by your kind sentiments and sends you the enclosed ticket for the first performance of *Hernani.*

"I have the honour to be," etc.

The long yellow nose rose in the air; the low-bowed head straightened up. From the red sitting room, the "room of the golden lily," invaded by the *Hernani* troops, laughter rises and a clamour of voices sounds; then is heard the voice of Adèle. Like one of those beautiful women who, on the eve of revolu-

tion, distribute powder and shot, she was distributing places at the theatre:

"*Hernani*," she proclaimed, "may be violently attacked; but it will be vigorously defended."

Sainte-Beuve was on his feet. His weasel face was all wrinkles, like a medlar. Not one ticket more. These importunate strangers were driving him from the house. Furtively, like a thief, he slipped into the entry, tiptoed down the circular staircase, crossed the frost-gripped garden, and reached the old ivy-covered wall. Before disappearing through the low door, the secret door locked with great bolts and opening on to an impasse, he turned to look back. Envy, love, admiration, and hatred burned in his heart.

Admiration: had not the debilitated disciple written to his master, to the god: "We bend before you like reeds; your breath as you pass could send us to the ground"?

Love: he thought of last summer. The secret door through which he was about to pass with rage in heart was the one out of which Victor Hugo walked on fine days after luncheon when he went to dream of Marius in the Luxembourg tree-nursery. At that precise moment Sainte-Beuve, a neighbour who knew he could then be alone, would turn up. In the gentle mildness of the golden days of June he would taste the sweet joy of finding Adèle alone; young dark-haired Adèle under the flowering acacias, playing with her children while he chatted with her beside the rustic bridge thrown across the garden pool. He wrote in one of his verses:

Often towards three o'clock I love to go to see you;
And, finding you alone, oh, mother and chaste spouse . . .
Your husband absent, gone to muse,
I yet come in . . . and open my heart to you.

Adèle, the heedless Adèle, had given herself up to these chats beside the pool, and in order the better to trouble her heart, Sainte-Beuve had pretended himself so delicate, so sensitive, so melancholy! Seeing her devout, this skeptic played at the ethereal Catholic. Gently, without a thought of ill, Madame

Hugo hearkened to this dolent voice: she herself, so treasured, so adulated, so loved, was she sure that she was happy? She would weep, and he would ask nothing more than to dry those secret tears, to bring the light of joy into those long dark eyes. And little by little the saintly friendship took on the uneasy face of love. Adèle had been startled; she had thought they should no longer see one another; but how well he had stilled her disquiet!

Now all this happiness was at end. *Hernani* and its barbaric bands had invaded the nest. Now when Sainte-Beuve arrived at his accustomed hour he found Adèle surrounded by three or four young ragged Republicans, bending over a plan of the theatre. She would say to him: "Oh, it's you, Sainte-Beuve? Hello! Do sit down. We are hard at it, you see."

No more the flights to the *Moulin au beurre*, or to Mother Saguet's. Gone are the days when they went to watch the sunsets in the Vaugirard plain, or to see them from the high towers of Notre-Dame. Something had died. Gone was the little young man with the old-man's face. The calculating Werther drew back the bolts and passed out into the night.

Envy: This chilled lover, this unsuccessful poet, felt envy swarming through him like a nest of snakes. In his desperation he confided in Juste Olivier: "Oh, Victor Hugo is a man who is not upset by such things. He lives in continual enjoyment of the great and delicate pleasures derived from his talent. What he does is so beautiful, so perfect! He is a happy man, fully happy. He lives in contentment with his family. He is gay, perhaps too gay. He is a happy man."

A happy man! On the eve of battle this "happy man," this chieftain, felt his heart grow weak. He, the beautiful archangel of romanticism, had received from Sainte-Beuve this astounding letter:

"February 1830

"My dear friend; You read Véron's letter this morning. Well, I have just written him to say that I shall not do the article on *Hernani* in the *Revue*, nor any other henceforth.

You cannot believe your eyes, but what you read is true. It is impossible for me, at this time, to do an article on *Hernani* that would not be detestable both in form and substance. I am fed up with *Hernani.*

". . . Destroy, forget, all this. Let not this letter be one more care among all those you now have. I needed to write to you, since it is impossible to speak to you alone, and your home is like a devastated town.

"Your sad and inviolable

"Sainte-Beuve."

"Read this, Adèle," said Victor. "The *post scriptum* is for you."

The dark head bowed and the beautiful golden eyelids were lowered. Adèle read:

"And as for madame, as for her whose name should resound on your lyre only when your chants are heard on bended knee: to think of her exposed the day long to profane eyes, distributing every day places to more than eighty young men hardly known to her the day before; that chaste and charming familiarity, the true prize of friendship, forever deflowered by the mob; the word devotion prostituted; utility set higher than all else; material welfare winning over all!"

Adèle read and re-read this *post scriptum,* written in a furious hand across the margin of the last page. Suddenly she grew pale and the light in her eyes faded. She had just learned the secret of Sainte-Beuve.

The Shadow on the Victory

"Fire and thunder!"

"It's Father Joy!"

Just in time, Berlioz—*le Père la Joie*—had jerked aside his bushy, Byronic head. There was a cry. A cabbage head, flung by a sure hand, had landed full in Monsieur de Balzac's face. On this twenty-sixth day of February, 1830, cabbage-heads and orange peels rained in the rue Montpensier. The

adherents of classic art were not submitting without a struggle to the invasion of their temple by the hordes of barbarism. All the sweepings of the theatre poured down from above upon the besiegers who roared, gesticulated, and threatened. Meanwhile their chiefs moved about, giving orders. "Be quiet, hell and fury! We'll take care of them after the play. Meanwhile, remember that the police have their eye on us, and if we are thrown out, *good-bye Hernani!*"

No one who looked at these wild, grotesque, bearded, long-haired, jerkin-wearing, Spanish-caped, Robespierre-waistcoated Henri-III-hatted denizens of romanticism could believe them to be so well disciplined. Four hundred of them had demanded entrance at one o'clock—hours before the arrival of the public. Since one o'clock of the afternoon they had been stamping in cadence, singing *atelier* songs, and declaiming Hugo's ballads to the accompaniment of the ridicule of a mob of men and women:

"Look at that one, with his pointed hat!"

"And this one. Lord, aren't they funny!"

"Look! the tall one over there in the Spanish cape."

"One of Devéria's daubers."

"They certainly didn't skimp on satin, velvet, braid and lace."

"And hair down to their shoulders!"

"Those fellows weren't born in wigs."

"And those beards. I wouldn't want to meet one of them on a dark night."

"I'm not so sure. After all, they're young and good looking."

And the shouting went on and on. Three o'clock chimed when finally the doors were opened. Led by their captains—Achille and Eugene Devéria, Charlet, Louis Boulanger, Théophile Gautier, Gérard de Nerval, Jehan Du Seigneur, Emile Deschamps, Pétrus Borel, Paul Huet, and Victor Pavie—*Hernani's* bandits moved in good order into the royal theatre. Behind them the doors shut and the bolts were shot. They were

locked in. Little did they care. They had four hours before them in which to reconnoitre the terrain, take possession of the trenches in the pit and the barricades in the second galleries. What a strange field of battle was this upon which Young France was to conquer or die! Everything was bathed in a vague shadow through which there fell from the openings in the roof pale bluish rays of light contrasting with the flickering reds of the dim exit lights. In this purple penumbra the army of romanticism organised for victory.

"My twenty-nine men of Ángers," Victor Pavie commanded, "shall undertake a special mission of confidence: they will be distributed in the top seats, the darkest corners of the tier boxes, on the benches behind the galleries, and in all the tenebrous hiding places where a strategic force can lie in ambush!"

"The rest," ordered Gérard, "will fill the stalls and the pit. At the first sign of hostility, biff the Philistines over the head, and go on hitting them."

"Do you answer for your men?" Paul Huet asked Louis Boulanger.

"As much as you for yours."

"*Hierro!* Death to the mossbacks!"

Once more the chieftains inspected their troops. There were Balzac, Berlioz, Cabat, Augustus Mac Keat, Préault, Bouchardy, Philotée O'Neddy, Jean Gigoux, Laviron, Amédée Pommier, Lemont, Piccini, Langle, Tolbecque, Tilmant, Kreutzer, Français, Célestin Nanteuil, Edouard Thierry, Achille Roche, Jules Vabre, Emmanuel Richomme, Henri de Cambris, Jules Renouvier, Poterlet, Armand de Pontmartin, Charles de Montalivet, Ernest de Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha, the natural son of the duke regnant, and Louis Veuillot, who had been given a ticket in recognition of his review of the preface to *Cromwell.* All of them represented Young France; all of them, poets, sculptors, painters, musicians, and ragged Republicans, stood shoulder to shoulder in the fray.

There was four hours of waiting in the penumbra. When

they were not declaiming, they were singing, and when not singing, they chatted.

"Taylor is uneasy about the result of the battle."

"Did any of you see that perfidious printer's error in the *Moniteur*—'*Herminie*,' or Castilian Honour?"

"One more black mark to chalk up against that scoundrelly censor, that horrible Brifaut."

"You'd think he'd have sense enough to keep out of this after making a hash of a play that was never even on the boards."

"What can you expect? *Hernani* is not *Ninus II*."

"This waiting makes a man hungry. Pass me the sausage."

"Like a shot of my wine?"

"Two fingers'll do."

"Who gets this boiled egg?"

"Father Joy!"

"Biff! Right in his hair."

"Hell and damnation!"

"Yes," Nodier was saying as he swayed back and forth like a weeping willow. "I am waiting for Dumas. We'll be able to make use of him in the battle. The situation is becoming critical. *Hernani* is absolutely original with Victor: as usual, his theories are carried out in it to the last limit of audacity of expression."

"Whatever happens," Gérard threw in, "we had rather conquer in danger than not. And we shall have a new *Cid*."

"A Corneille," said someone, "no less proud and high-souled and Castilian than the old one, but using Shakespeare's palette."

"Bravo, Gautier!" It was Théo who had spoken.

"I don't know anything finer than these lines," said Pavie. "Listen:

Me suivre dans les bois, dans les monts, sur les grèves
Chez des hommes pareils aux démons de vos rêves;
Soupçonner tout, les yeux, les voix, les pas, le bruit;
Dormir sur l'herbe, boire au torrent, et la nuit,

Entendre, en allaitant quelque enfant qui s'éveille,
Les balles des mousquets siffler à votre oreille;
Etre errante avec moi, proscrite et, s'il le faut,
Me suivre où je suivrai mon père—à l'échafaud." [1]

Thunders of applause. Then fresh stamping of feet in the galleries, feet beating time to the incessant cry:

"Down with the mossbacks! the mossbacks! the mossbacks!"

Nodier went on, a bit solemnly: "I understand the excitement of the town, the king's uneasiness, the cabalas among the royalists. Since he was received at Saint-Cloud, Victor has ceased to be a Bourbon:

> Sire, as sadly I go from thy house,
> My loyalty goes from my sorrowing heart.

"He told Vigny that he was going to leave the Right and give proof of his loyalty to the Left."

"Sainte-Beuve again."

"Down with Racine! Down with Brifaut!"

"I wish the title had been *Three for One.* That's more like Calderon than *Hernani.*"

"Yes, but *Castilian Honour* is awfully good."

"What I didn't like was *The Youth of Charles V.*"

"Down with the mossbacks! the mossbacks! the mossbacks!"

"Boo! boo! boo!"

"That was for Népomucène."

"And for that beefy Baour-Lormian."

"Saint-Marc Girardin is going to be here."

"And Benjamin Constant."

"And Thiers. All the Left wing."

"Let me tell you: Mérimée asked for two bishop's caps for Madame Récamier."

"Where is old Virtue going to be stuck."

[1] Follow me into the forest, on the heights, by the strand, among men like the demons in your dreams; suspect everything, eyes, voices, steps, sounds; drink at the stream, and at night, when you are suckling some sleepless babe, hear musket bullets whistle past your ear. Wander with me, proscribed, and follow me where I shall follow my father—to the scaffold.

"Victor sent her the last box he had."

"Where she and Chateaubriand will lord it over everybody."

"*C'était pendant l'horreur d'une profonde nuit. . . .*"

This line out of Racine was greeted with ear-splitting whistles of derision.

"Down with the mossbacks! the mossbacks! the mossbacks!"

"This *pâté* stinks of garlic."

"Chocolate!"

"Buns!"

"Suresnes wine!"

"If Mars doesn't declaim:

Vous êtes mon lion superbe et généreux

I'll kill her," Jehan Du Seigneur declared coldly."

"Ever since Victor threatened to take the part away from her, Mars has been on her good behaviour."

"She'll read that line; never fear."

"If she doesn't! . . ."

"You expect Mars to understand a masterpiece! What a joke!"

"And Michelot taking Don Carlo's lines at a gallop!"

"And Firmin-Hernani laughing in his sleeve."

"The only one we can count on is good old Joanny playing Ruy Gomez."

"Yes; he lost two fingers fighting under General Hugo."

"Do you know that when he saw Victor looking at his mutilated hand he said, 'My only title to glory is that when I was young I served under the father, and now that I am old I serve under the son!'

"String up Jouy! String up Jouy!"

"Brifaut's head on the tip of a pike!"

"Picot, Picot! Your house is afire!"

"To the guillotine with Delescluze!"

"Down with the mossbacks! the mossbacks! the mossbacks!"

"Ah!" A long drawn out sigh of satisfaction and a joyous shout: "The lights! the lights!"

Slowly, slowly, the blazing chandelier with its triple crown of gleaming light was lowered from the ceiling. The footlights went up. The candelabras in the stage boxes gleamed. Little by little the theatre filled. The doors of the boxes slammed shut. On their plush edges lay the bouquets and opera-glasses of the lionesses and duchesses who were seating themselves with little jerks of adjustment of gowns and shoulder straps. The romantic school, being reproached with its love of ugliness, made a special point of applauding the entrance of beautiful women. What bad taste!

"My dear, did you ever hear of such a thing!"

"How nasty! They are eating in the theatre, and using their handkerchiefs as napkins."

"What a smell of garlic! Arthur, pass me my salts."

"If it was nothing but garlic!"

"Malvina! what is it? She's gone pale."

Followed by two young men who came in like acolytes, Sainte-Beuve, who was not expected, turned up towards six o'clock.

"I say," Mérimée pointed him out to Stendhal; "his confessor must have given him permission to attend."

There was a triple salvo of applause to greet the entry of Dumas and his crinkly shock of hair, worn like a plume. Another round: Vigny, grave, majestic, and angelical.

"Boo! boo!" the first and second balconies greeted them. The groans came from Ducis and his collection of baldheads.

They were answered by Préault with: "To the guillotine!"

"To the guillotine!" echoed Préault's friends.

Vigny stood up, his calm gone. "My literary fury," he declared, "allows me to understand the political fury of '93."

Suddenly the whole theatre rose: a white gown had appeared in a stage box. Was that Madame Victor Hugo? No, that white gown and blue scarf, those spirals of golden hair, were Delphine Gay, their blond Muse. The romantics applauded, and the classicists remained silent. Facing Delphine in another stage box sat another woman in white, dazzling in the brilliance of her dark beauty. It was Adèle Hugo, *doña Sol.*

This was not applause, but a frenzied ovation. While exchanging a nod with Delphine, Madame Victor Hugo bowed with royal grace.

"Why that blue band under the chin?" Sainte-Beuve asked Paul Foucher. "It is extremely becoming, but does it mean she is ill?"

"No," Paul replied. "My sister has the toothache. You know: *toothache, heartache,* they say."

Sainte-Beuve lowered his head and murmured: "She has never looked more beautiful."

"What is that?"

Protests and uproar. From the edges of balconies and galleries a rain of white paper fluttered down upon the boxes and the stalls. The papers stuck to people's clothes, fell upon their upturned faces, clung in the women's hair, slipped into their bodices; and the whole audience was busy peeling and stripping itself of them.

Behind the curtain a man stood at the peep-hole and looked out upon the frenzied house. A moment before Mademoiselle Mars had said to him: "Fine friends you have! I've played before all sorts of audiences, but I owe you the doubtful privilege of playing before one like this."

But what she said was of no importance. It was not her irritation that was obsessing him: it was Sainte-Beuve's letter. What tortured and tormented him was that tonight he was renouncing the purity and severity of youth, was prostituting before the world the secrets of his soul, the profound dignity of love. Never again would he be Didier. Gone was the beautiful archangel with the stern and radiant smile. The theatre would henceforth sully his wings. The Victor Hugo of the *Odes* was to die:

Until that moment, in the starry night,
Ruy, Carlos, the bandit, the horn and the forest,
And pale doña Sol had been my dream and my secret . . .

The three knocks sounded for the rise of the curtain. Slowly it folded and was drawn back. The scene showed a bedroom

lighted by a small lamp. Doña Josefa Duarte, an ancient dwarf dressed in jet, listened to the rapping on the secret door:

> Is that already he? True, from the hidden
> Staircase . . .

An uproar greeted this un-classical continuation of the phrase from one line of verse into the next. The *enjambement* had made its entry into French versification.

"Why, he has broken a line of verse!"

"It is not negligence: it is beauty!"

"Sh!"

"Out with him!"

For ten minutes the doña rose, sat down, rose again, and was unable to go on with her lines.

Gérard stood up in the stalls and asked: "Who is that brute standing and roaring his head off in the first box?"

"That is Scribe."

"The filthy dog. I'm going to knock him down."

At the end of the dialogue between don Carlos and Hernani which closes the second act with the words,

> And when I'll have won the world!
> Then I'll have won the grave,

a few of the boxes joined in the applause which rose from the pit and the upper balconies.

The third act began well. Ruy Gomez's lines to doña Sol touched the heart of Chateaubriand, that aged lover of love; and the pretty women applauded Joanny. Ernest de Saxe-Cobourg shouted: "Hurrah for women!" But the portrait scene wearied them, and two more portraits would have brought hisses. Charles V's monologue was an immense success. The classicists refrained from protest because it was a monologue, and the romantics because it was beautiful. They whispered their admiration. Meanwhile, the liberals and the Bonapartists saw what was going on. *Cromwell* they had recognized to be Bonaparte: now it was clear that Charles V was Napoleon. The house was one crackling bit of tinder.

Dripping with sweat and admiration, Victor Pavie jumped from his place and sat astride the balcony rail at the risk of falling into the stalls. The twenty-nine men of Angers surrounded him, shouted with him out of full lungs while their feet beat time like the feet of women trampling grapes in the wine season.

"Cretins!"

"Imbeciles!"

"Eunuchs!"

Having strayed into one of the *claques*, the young Count d'Haussonville and his friend Georges d'Harcourt had the audacity to smile and shrug their shoulders disdainfully. They were passed along from hand to hand, like wisps of straw, as far as the outer door, to the accompaniment of sardonic cheers.

"Really, you are going too far," protested Armand Carrel.

These were scarcely the lads to talk limits to.

The fifth act, that long duet of love, the most beautiful duet of love that can be sung by two young beings in love with one another, brought the victory even nearer, and the curtain fell. The *bravos!* which followed were not human. Fame itself seemed to be applauding with its wings. For a half hour the name of Hugo was shouted in the house, and as he still refused to appear, the roaring voices were turned towards Adèle, who sat pale with emotion. Hats and handkerchiefs were waved to her as if she had been a queen. And was she not indeed the queen of the army of romanticism?

"Victory! victory! victory!" roared the hairy band, and ran hot-foot to the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs. They invaded the garden and the staircase to the shouts of "Victor! Victor!" for after the conquest they sought the conqueror. He, who a moment before had been embraced by Mademoiselle Mars, and had now been embraced forever by fame, came forward nervous and trembling. He thanked his friends, his soldiers, and then, on the pretext of weariness, locked himself in his room. There, alone at last, he took from an old chest a bundle of letters, his letters to his *fiancée*, his love letters. Hernani

was himself, Victor Hugo; but doña Sol was Adèle. All that Hernani had said to doña Sol, Victor Hugo had written to Mademoiselle Foucher:

> Oh, you weep! you weep!
> Again I am to blame! Who will punish me . . .

All this that Hernani had deflowered, Victor had written to Adèle on the twenty-eighth of May 1822: "Alas, and yet, the day before yesterday, I made you cry again. . . ."

> Oh, how sweet a dagger blow from you to me would be!

This passionate cry from the heart, which Firmin had sent forth before fifteen hundred spectators, was but the echo of a letter written on the eighth of January, 1822, to Mademoiselle Foucher: "If you were to command me tomorrow to die only in order that you might be amused, I should do it on the spot, or else I should not believe I loved you. . . ."

Ah, Sainte-Beuve had been right, cruelly right. In delivering doña Sol up to the public gaze, Victor Hugo had *exposed to profane eyes* his dearest secrets, his beautiful romance of love, his pure and burning youth. How distant was now the night in Rheims when the angelical poet, the faithful lover, had declined to sit at table with actresses! Now something had died in him, on this evening in February of 1830. He was no longer to belong to one, but to all; and the conqueror wept for his fall. He kissed his love letters, and knew not that he was kissing them farewell:

> When in the year eighteen hundred thirty
> Mademoiselle Mars, Firmin, and Joanny
> For the first time played *Hernani*,
> I felt a shudder of shame . . .

Of shame. There are victories more costly than defeats. Now Sainte-Beuve could come if he would. . . . And the *Princess Negroni*, too.

PART TWO

LOVER, PEER, PATRIOT

The Three Glories of France

A few weeks after the first night of *Hernani*, Madame Hugo received a call from the worthy woman who owned the house in which they lived and herself occupied the ground floor.

"You are very nice, my little lady," said the good woman, "and your husband is an excellent fellow, but you make too much noise to suit me. I sold my shop in order to have a life of peace, and when I bought a house in this quiet street I thought I was going to have it. But for three months now there has been a procession of people filing in and out of your apartment, noise in the stairway, and earthquakes over my head. I'm afraid we are not going to be able to go on living together."

"Do you mean that you are giving me notice?"

"I don't like to do it, and I shall be sorry to see you go. You're a nice couple and you are fond of your children. Good Lord, don't you ever go to bed? I really feel sorry for you. Your husband certainly took up a hard way of earning a living."

Hernani, thus, had put Victor out of his house. The devil take *Hernani* and the Hernanians! The conqueror was thinking of rest and work. They crossed the river and went to live in the solitude of the François Premier quarter. A company had only recently bought up this desert of verdure: it had cut through it two streets and a small square, brought up from Moret the charming "house of Francis the First" and set it down at the corner of the Cours-la-Reine and the rue Bayard. In May 1830, the Hugos went to live in what was then the only house in the rue Jean-Goujon. On the sixteenth, Victor wrote to Sainte-Beuve, who had gone to Rouen: "We like it here; indeed, we like it very much. We have trees, air,

a lawn beneath our windows, complete solitude, and no Hernanians."

But in 1830 it was impossible to avoid the wind of rebellion which was rising over Paris. Two months later the hermit of the rue Jean-Goujon wrote to the solitary of Saint-Point, Lamartine: "Everybody has grown feverish, and it is impossible to wall oneself up against impressions from without. . . . People talk politics as naturally as they breathe."

On the twenty-seventh of July, Gustave Planche drove up in a cabriolet.

"Oh, the pretty horse!" cried Léopoldine, beating her hands.

"Didine," said the critic; "how should you like an ice at the Palais-Royal?"

An ice and a drive in a carriage: what fun! Léopoldine kissed her parents good-bye and drove off with Planche. But not for long! They found the Place Louis XV (now the Place de la Concorde) occupied by Marmont's troops. Paris seemed like a ship about to be dismantled. What was it all about? Planche asked an officer.

"About face!" said the officer curtly. "Trying to get to the Palais-Royal when there's fighting going on in front of the *Comédie Française?* Strollers and children had better stay at home to-day."

And to the great disappointment of Didine, who with her rabbit eyes, her pretty mouth, her dark curls, ribbons, and full taffeta frock, was sweet enough to eat, the cabriolet about-faced.

"Back already!" exclaimed her mamma. They told her why, and she grew frightened.

The next day soldiers were quartered in the Champs-Elysées; it was impossible to get through the lines to market, besides which, shops in that outlying part of the city were rare.

"No letters? no newspapers?" asked Victor.

"None."

Artillery wagons rolled along the quay. In the distance they could hear the cracking of rifles and the ringing of the

tocsin. The July sun, the savage sun of mid-summer poured down upon the barricades. It was ninety in the shade. Soldiers came by and asked for a glass of water. Handing back the glass, one of them fell in a faint in the street.

"Hm!" grunted General Cavaignac, another tenant in the house. "We are rather in a bad place here. If the fighting moves in this direction our house, which is isolated and built of stone, will certainly be commandeered and we shall be besieged."

Bullets whistled over the garden. "Didine! Charlot! Come in!"

"Since we are blocked, we might as well try to get through the lines," Victor suggested to Monsieur de Mortemart, another tenant.

"Come along."

In the avenue des Champs-Elysées their way was barred by a battery of cannon.

"I am Monsieur Victor Hugo."

The ranks parted.

From afar came the sound of all the church bells of Paris. The town was wild. Each outburst of laughter disclosed another barricade. The royalists were building redoubts, sawing down trees to erect entanglements. A picket of cavalry cantered up from the Etoile barrier with General de Girardin at its head.

"What are you doing here?" he asked.

"I live here," Hugo replied.

"You do: well, I advise you to get out. I have just come down from Saint-Cloud, and you are going to see bullets fly here soon."

The next day, writing in his diary, Vigny observed of the Bourbons: "They are not coming to Paris, though men die for them. A race of Stuarts." Their white flag lay in blood and dirt. The Champs-Elysées were free, as free as all Paris throughout which the tri-colour now fluttered.

At the time of the *Hernani* battle one of the young ragged

Republicans said to his neighbour, Pontmartin: "What we want is to win over Victor Hugo to our cause. The job is already three-quarters done. He is leaning, and we must make him fall. Already the censorship of *Marion de Lorme* has exasperated him. He thundered magnificently against Count Apponyi's refusal to accord to our marshals the titles won on the field of battle. His monarchism is factitious, nothing more than an adolescent fancy. As a matter of fact, the Polignac ministry is just the kind to deliver him over to us hand and foot. At this moment he is neutral: tomorrow he will be in revolt."

Pontmartin's neighbour saw truly. Victor Hugo was not the poet laureate of a party. He was the "sonorous echo," the singer of France herself, sharing, submitting himself to, the sentiments of the collective soul. Cruelly bled by the Empire and avid of peace, France had greeted the return of the Bourbons with an immense sigh of hope. The *Ode on the Birth of the Duke de Bordeaux* and the *Ode on the Coronation of Charles X* had been breathed into Victor by France. When Austria insulted the heroes of Austerlitz and Wagram, it was France who ground her teeth, showed her fist, and hurled into the insulter's face the challenge entitled *Ode to the Vendôme Column.* And here was France once more on the barricades, trampling under foot the white lily, singing the *Marseillaise* and flaunting the tri-colour. Delacroix, dandy though he was, could not withstand an appeal so moving: was Victor then to resist? Resist? He never thought of it for a second. True, he was still minded of the naïve faith of his youth and still respectful of the aged vanquished king. Never, indeed, was this noble heart to traduce its

Sombre fidelity to fallen things.

His deferential voice was to accompany Charles X on the road of exile; and it was the voice of France herself which ordered

No outrage to the ancient moving with slow steps into exile.

Sadness Risen Out of Guilt

Meanwhile, the sun was rising, the eagle was spreading once again his wings and flying into the sun. By the voice of Victor Hugo France had celebrated the coronation of the king; and again in Hugo's voice France now celebrated the coronation of the people. One year later, in his *Hymne aux morts de Juillet* he glorified in his sublime and immortal verses, as imperishable as eternal France herself, not only the martyrs of the Revolution, but as well all those who had fallen for the French homeland:

Those who piously died for their country
Deserve to hear over their graves the prayers of the people.

Sadness Risen Out of Guilt

One day, in the summer of 1829, Adèle's rich Andalusian hair had fallen in the presence of Sainte-Beuve, who reminded her of it in one of the poems he published over the name of Joseph Delorme:

> Armed thus with your comb you looked
> Like a young immortal with her helmet of jet.

On that day Sainte-Beuve knew that he desired Adèle. Yet the chaste wife, the young mother, so busied with her three children, continued to see in Sainte-Beuve the best of friends until on the eve of *Hernani* she learned, with beating heart, the truth.

On the seventeenth of March 1830, his *Consolations* appeared. Victor Hugo dominates this collection of verses. The dedicatory preface makes this clear: "My friend, this little book is yours. Your name is written on almost every page; your presence, or the memory of you, is bound up with all my thoughts. I give it to you; or rather, I give it back to you, for without you it would not exist." Art and poetry, the friendship of Chateaubriand, Lamartine, and Victor and Adèle Hugo, had won back Sainte-Beuve to the faith of his youth. When his "mad ardour" is not drawing him down to base de-

sires, when he is aware that even more than Adèle it is himself he must flee, this "pilgrim without a message" dreams of a monastic life:

> Oh, I have always dreamed of a solitary life
> In the obscure ruin of some ancient monastery. . . .

The intrusion of the Hernanians had been followed by the exodus of the Hugo family to a distant quarter. Sainte-Beuve was in consternation. Where could he go? He went with Guttinguer to Normandy on the thirtieth of April. Before leaving he asked Adèle's permission to write.

"Of course," she answered; "I should be pleased."

Nevertheless, Sainte-Beuve did not remain long away from Paris. Like Amaury, the hero of his novel, *Volupté*, he "coveted and caressed the rock of disaster." Adèle struggled heroically against his passion, against this secret burning flame which disquieted and perturbed her. One day, Sainte-Beuve came upon her as she was reading the letters written her by her *fiancé*. Was not this her way of reminding him of the existence of things too sacred to be touched by profane hands?

"One letter had followed another. The scenes, the joys, and the fears of other days, emerged one by one out of the casket which was perfumed as by a long-faded wreath, worn on the first nuptial gown, long put away and now half drawn into view. The past of her family, her country, and their virginal love arose and encircled her. I came into the room, but she did not stir. She was still seized by her emotion, and lay with her head back on the cushions, her eyes moist, her arms loose hung, a letter on her knee. She allowed me to touch with my hands these sacred letters; she explained to me the circumstances in which tears had then been drawn from her. I was even allowed to read two or three of his lines to her, but not one of hers to him. That, her modesty would not permit. . . ."

The sight of these love letters, the thought of this betrothal spread before his eyes, of this living past in which his rival appeared so exalted, so pure, so handsome, disturbed Sainte-

Beuve to the point where once again he had to fly. But where was he to go? Day and night, he roamed about the city, his imagination inflamed, drowning himself with dark ecstasy in the river of mud that constitutes nocturnal Paris. His "devouring flight across these worlds of corruption" finally bewildered and broke him. He determined that the next day he would lay "at the feet of her about whom his dreams had remained sacred, a sadness born of guilt." And yet, better not: though his heart break, he would not speak, he would never speak, he would respect the great friend of whom daily he grew more jealous. He was on the rack. Torn in heart, he could think only of flight. Once again he went into Normandy, to Honfleur where, among the hortensias and rhododendrons, Ulrich and Arthur Guttinguer awaited him.

Towards the end of July, while the *Trois Glorieuses* were crackling, little Adèle opened her eyes to the world.

"Sainte-Beuve shall be her godfather," declared her happy father.

Sainte-Beuve came back. He aided in the political evolution of Victor Hugo, and on Sunday the nineteenth of September, he held his goddaughter over the baptismal font: Adèle, his child in spirit,

Pure, and *yet* in her something of me.

Two days earlier, mad with rage and love, he had written to Victor Pavie: "Pray for me and love me a little, for I am suffering the most horrible torture of soul. All my suppressed poetry and all my hopeless love are like acids which devour me. I am once more mean. Oh, when one is hated, how quickly one becomes mean! I am not hated, or at least I do not worry about those who hate me. But my ill and my crime are that I am not loved as I who love wish to be loved. That is the whole secret of my mad, incoherent, slovenly, and idle existence. While I was still a child I thought of only one form of happiness in life, which was love. I have never been granted it, and never even felt it fully. . . ."

Meanwhile Victor remained calm, serene, and confident. Adèle was nursing her fifth child, but, since the beginning of September, Victor had locked himself in and was writing *Notre-Dame de Paris.* Rebuffed, disappointed, tortured by love and jealousy, Sainte-Beuve took advantage of a literary subterfuge to make himself understood by her whom he loved in vain. He poured his intimate feelings into an article on Diderot which appeared on the twentieth of September in the *Globe.* The effusions of Diderot to Mademoiselle Voland allowed him to attest the fidelity of his own love. Yet the obstacles between Sainte-Beuve and Adèle were infinite. The greatest of them was the modesty of this decent young woman who, in his presence, pretended total ignorance of Joseph Delorme's secret. Thenceforward his passion became irritated and envenomed. There would be much talk of Joseph Delorme at the beginning of November. In the preface to his *Poésies* published by the *Globe* Sainte-Beuve gave ample evidence of his pain and his bile. This was already a farewell to romanticism and to Victor Hugo, to mysticism, which is to say to Madame Hugo.

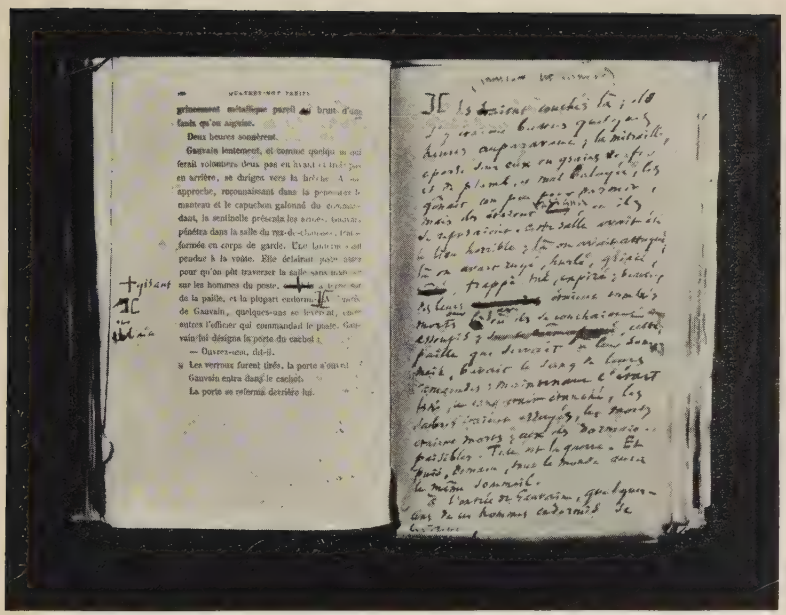
When his article was read in the rue Jean-Goujon, Adèle suppressed the tears in her proud, slumbrous, beautiful eyes. Victor, who was as overcome as she herself, tore himself for a moment from *Notre-Dame de Paris.*

"I must write to him," he said. And in Adèle's name and his own he wrote: "I have just read your article on yourself, and I have wept over it. I beg you, for pity's sake, my friend, do not abandon yourself this way. Remember that you belong to us, and that there are two hearts here of which you are the dearest and most constant thought. . . . Come to see us."

How was he to resist such a message. Sainte-Beuve made up his mind to go back to the rue Jean-Goujon. He could no longer remain silent. His secret was stifling him.

"Sainte-Beuve! At last. I give up the company of Esméralda and Quasimodo in order to receive you."

"Victor, I must speak to you. It is absolutely necessary."



With corrections in Victor Hugo's writing.

PROOF OF *Quatrevingt-treize*

They went into the study where Victor was building his cathedral.

"Victor, do you see no inconvenience for anybody in the constantly greater intimacy into which you welcome me?"

"Explain yourself."

He explained himself. He spoke in that sinuous, enveloping, insidious manner of his perturbation, his anguish, his torture. And he ended: "The best thing for me is never to come back to the rue Jean-Goujon."

But Victor shook his head and smiled. *He*, suspect his wife and his friend! Not for an instant.

"My dear Sainte-Beuve," he said, "I thank you for your cordial confidence. I have already thought of the inconvenience which you point out to me, but I have not been able to convince myself that it is serious. Do not, I beg you, with that restless mind of yours, begin to torment a simple situation which is guaranteed by all our deep and loyal feelings. Sometimes we create difficulties for ourselves by thinking of them and fearing them. There is a danger that you might fall into this error. You want my decision, and I shall say only this: yesterday I counted upon your habitual and expected presence among us; and to-day I count upon it no less."

Too moved by the strong man's affection to be able to reply at length, Sainte-Beuve dared not raise his tear-filled eyes. He had barely the strength to shake the noble hand held out to him and to murmur in a whisper: "I put myself into your hands." Alas, he was no longer master of himself. Henceforth, when he roamed through the leafless paths of the Luxembourg Gardens, it was with envy, jealousy, and hatred in his heart. In a purple cloud, he saw ever the strange Oriental beauty which had enslaved him. Then he would think of the glorious and beloved husband, the royal possessor of all these treasures. And his pain would redouble. He would feel everything crumble within him—friendship, duty, and religion.

He tried going back to the rue Jean-Goujon, but from his first visit Victor seemed less sure of himself, anxious, perturbed.

He could no longer see Adèle except in the presence of her husband. Once again the subject was debated between Victor and him; but this time the interview took on a tragic colour.

"This is the most painful hour of my life," said the poet. "For Adèle as well as for me, the time has come to choose: friendship or love? I have chosen love. If you consent, the person you love shall be called upon to choose between us." These were the puerile sublimities of romantic love which proclaimed the sovereignty of passion and acknowledged its kingship alone. Sainte-Beuve hesitated, tergiversated, knew himself defeated. So much greatness of soul was beyond him, reducing him to silence. He withdrew icily, wounded and humiliated. And yet, as he left, Hugo could not restrain an impulsive cry from the heart:

"Come back!"

To come back was impossible. On the seventh of December, Sainte-Beuve wrote with his heart's blood to the most generous of friends: "What should I do henceforth in your home, now that I have deserved your suspicion, now that distrust has glided between us, now that you watch me uneasily, and Madame Hugo may not feel my eyes upon her until she has consulted yours?"

With each of Sainte-Beuve's letters, with each of these letters which he had to read to an anxious, tormented, unhappy Adèle, Victor lost a little more of his assurance, felt himself a little more disquieted, a little more deeply wounded. It occurred to him no longer to smile, as at the time of Sainte-Beuve's first confession. Doubt was making inroads upon him.

But 1830—the year of the fall of the Bourbons, of the *Trois Glorieuses*, the victory of *Hernani*, and Sainte-Beuve's withdrawal—1830 was drawing to an end. Victor Hugo strove passionately to forget. On the thirty-first of December, Sainte-Beuve, who was impoverished, stripped of everything, near indigence, and who now lived on the fourth storey of the hôtel de Rouen in the cour du Commerce, sent toys to Léopoldine

and to the other Hugo children. Didine, who would soon be seven years old, sent him a letter of thanks:

"Hello Sainte-Beuve, I thank you very much for your beautiful doll. Charles is very glad too and we will kiss you when you come to see papa and mamma, my little sister is very glad too. Your little friend, Didine."

The next day Didine's father sent Sainte-Beuve this note, filled with charm and melancholy grace: "You were very kind to my children, my friend. We need you, and we thank you, my wife and I, for this kindness. Do come to dine with us on Tuesday, the day after tomorrow. 1830 *is past.*"

What There Is in a Bottle of Ink

The fourth of September 1830. Hugo bought a bottle of ink and a great garment of grey wool which covered him from his neck to his feet. He locked up his clothes in order to escape the temptation to go out, and entered his novel as if it were a prison. We know that he had decided reasons to be sad. Autumn passed without luring him by its sunsets. Little by little his creation took possession of him. He felt the cold of winter so little that in December he worked with open windows. On the fifteenth of January, the book was finished, and with it the bottle of ink.

"Adèle," he said to his wife, to whom he had dictated the last pages of the novel, "I should like to change the title of this book and call it *What There Is in a Bottle of Ink.*"

Adèle shook her head. "No," she said, "the public is expecting *Notre-Dame de Paris.*"

Notre-Dame de Paris, which had been germinating in Victor Hugo for three years past! Notre-Dame, the cathedral rebuilt and recreated by this visionary! Esméralda, frail and lively as a wasp with her gilded bodice, her full striped skirt, her bare shoulders, the slender legs seen from time to time as her skirts swung, her black hair, her flaming eyes, Esméralda dancing with Jali, her goat. The thin, white-faced Pierre

Gringoire. Handsome Phœbus de Chateaupers, for whom Abel's brother-in-law, the Marquis Duvidal de Montferrier, undoubtedly served as model. La Sachette, filled with hatred and maternal love in her "witch's hovel." Quasimodo the deaf, Quasimodo the hunchbacked and bandy-legged, the soul of an angel in the body of a demon. The demoniacal Claude Frollo, the vagrant army called the *Truands*, "the dockeared thieves, the criminal *Coquillards*, the thimble-riggers, the sham-Abrams, the cadgers, the Jeremy diddlers, the cutpurses, the flash coves, the dummy-chuckers, the swell mobsmen, the mumpers, the pallyards, the foundlings, the Christ-snivellers, the pity-croakers." *Notre-Dame de Paris*, that living cathedral, swarming with gargoyles, ringing with all its carillons answered by all the bell-towers of Paris:

"First sounded the scattered tinklings that moved from church to church, like players warning one another that they were about to begin. Then suddenly one saw, for there are times when the ear itself seems to have the gift of sight, a kind of column of sound, a smoke of harmony, arise over each bell-tower. The vibration of each bell would rise straight into the air, pure and alone in the splendid morning sky. Then little by little the sounds would grow greater, melt into one another, vanish in one another, fuse in a magnificent concert, and what followed was one mass of vibration which floated, undulated, bounded and whirled over the city, prolonging far beyond the horizon the deafening circle of its oscillations."

What a beautiful carillon was this which was rung out by the bells of *Notre-Dame de Paris* and which floated from tower to tower! The Paris mob which had just sacked the archiepiscopal palace stopped in its tracks to listen to it. Young France bared its head and knelt at the sound. Who could speak of the cathedral after Victor Hugo had spoken? Michelet himself surrendered: "There is one," he wrote, "who has marked this monument with so leonine a claw that no man will ever again dare touch it. This is henceforth his fief, his thing; it

is the entailed estate of Quasimodo. Side by side with the old cathedral he has built a cathedral of poetry as firmly seated on its foundations as the other, and with towers equally high."

Feuilles d'automne

Autumn leaves. With the suppression of censorship, *Marion de Lorme* would now be able to moan and sob on the boards. The *Comédie Française* and Mademoiselle Mars clamoured for the play. But Victor had been dissatisfied with the House of Molière ever since the rehearsals of *Hernani.* At one moment he persuaded Dumas to join him in a plan for taking over the theatre, managing it without the traditional State subsidy, apart from a guarantee of 2,000 francs of receipts for each play of Racine and Voltaire. With fifty-four such performances, the classics would bring in 108,000 francs per annum; the expenses of the theatre were not more than 1,500 francs a day; they would have a net profit of 500 francs daily. This magnificent project was rejected by the government, and Hugo and Dumas, soured by their failure, abandoned the State theatre. They were welcomed at the Porte-Saint-Martin Theatre, which *Antony* was then filling with his roars: "Ask a corpse how many times it has lived! Curses! I fell asleep with my hand on my dagger and dreamt of the guillotine and the scaffold." *Antony* was played by Bocage, of whom an admiring lady, so overcome by emotion that she broke her fan, said he was "so Giaour." Adèle was the vibrant and trembling Dorval. Soon Bocage would play Didier and Dorval would be Marion. Thus Mademoiselle Mars, stamping with rage, saw herself done successively out of two magnificent parts—Adèle d'Hervey and Marion de Lorme—by Alfred de Vigny's mistress. As charming at rehearsals as Mars had been peevish, Dorval, after hearing the fifth act, took the author by the arm.

"Monsieur Hugo," she said in her drawling, modulated voice,

"your Didier is a disagreeable fellow. I do everything for him, and he dies without a kind word to me. Tell him that he is wrong not to forgive me."

Mérimée, Dumas, and Sainte-Beuve had already given Victor the same advice. At present, his heart filled with the distress of a threatened love, Hugo no longer felt in himself the same strength and rigour. He had but promised his friends the pardon which Marion was now granted. But though Didier might forgive, he refused to escape from his prison, for how could he have gone on living, knowing of Marion's infidelities?

The summer of 1831 was a tragic time for Victor. Never before had the poet doubted his unique love of so many years. Yet, like Didier, since it had to be, he would forgive her.

Marion de Lorme was not as successful as *Antony*, but the poet was too preoccupied with other cares to think about it. Besides, there were his *Feuilles d'automne*. On the twenty-fourth of November 1831, the same year which saw the towers of *Notre-Dame de Paris* rise in the sky of romanticism and saw *Marion de Lorme* take the boards, the *Feuilles d'automne* were published by Renduel. Before this marvellous harmony, this soulful poetry, all party quarrels were silent. Victor Hugo had become the poet of all Frenchmen: a soul of crystal, a vibrant soul sensitive to all the emotions of the soul of France, had expressed itself. Like all of Young France, Lahorie's godson deified Napoleon. He stretched forth his arms to fame. This proud poet sought only to be the voice of the nation and of liberty, and, acknowledging the errors of his youth, he refused to blush for his time:

> I am the son of this century. Each year
> An error flies from me in astonishment.
> Disillusioned, one god remains to me,
> You, sacred fatherland, and you, holy liberty.

He lingers dreamily before sunsets and muses long over the graces of childhood. Parents being in the world in order that we may learn how not to rear our children, Victor is minded

of the stern upbringing by Madame Hugo when he writes to Didine, to Charlot, and to Toto:

> Yours are the gardens, the courts, the staircases,
> Shake down the floors, the ceilings, and the pillars.

Little Didine has already grown into Léopoldine; and as she buries her head in the lap of her weeping mother she hears a sweet voice say:

> My daughter prays: prays first for her
> Who so many nights rocked her swaying cradle. . . .

The spouse and mother was still the mistress, and her troubled face appears in many pages among these dying leaves. How sad are these poems of love:

> Alas, my darling, alas! shadows
> Invade our sky and life grows dark.
> Slowly unhappiness spreads above us.

And yet in the closing pages the man pulls himself together, the hero rejects both tears of love and family joys. The plaints of oppressed nations rise into his ears, and generous France speaks with his voice:

> Our muse owes defence to powerless men;
> Love, and family, and childhood, and sweet songs
> And tranquil hours I renounce and add
> To my lyre a cord of bronze!

Will Sainte-Beuve Leave?

Back from Brussels, whence he had written to Victor in a very humble, very repentant tone, Sainte-Beuve hurried to the rue Jean-Goujon. Adèle was alone. He could not conceal from her his long torment, his despair, and his humiliation. She pitied him, listened to him, and at the bottom of her heart blamed the severity of her husband. "Poor Sainte-Beuve who lived only for her." Adèle was one of those women whom pity moves and makes weak. She could not give up the rôle of comforter. But with a jealous husband ever in the offing, what

were they to do? They arranged to write secretly to one another. And now there was something in her life that was hidden from, foreign and almost hostile to, the man to whom until this moment she had unquestioningly belonged. Suffering in her soul and in her flesh, determined henceforth to love only with her heart, Adèle sought to evade the passionate embraces of her husband. He, meanwhile, had become an Othello. His imagination multiplied, magnified, and denatured the least gesture, the most innocent word. He who had been so magnificently confident became suspicious and stormy-browed. He questioned her, spied upon her, accused her. She loved him less; she loved him not at all. Why? For whom had she ceased to love him? His senses afire—and his senses were as magnificent as his genius—he burst against the chamber door that was shut in his face, he threw himself upon the couch from which he was repulsed. Sweet and patient as she was, her answers were not of the disarming kind:

"Can I help it if I love you less? Why must I be tortured this way?"

And then there were outbursts, tears, attacks of despair and of adoration. He would throw himself at her feet and cry to be forgiven—although there was nothing to forgive the poor great man.

Meanwhile Sainte-Beuve—such was his nature—was astonished and irritated. In his *Volupté* he records that, having left his wife chatting with Amaury (himself), the Marquis de Couaën (Victor Hugo) came back a half hour later, found them still together, and could not refrain from saying: "Ah! You still here?"

"It is remarkable," Sainte-Beuve was shortly to write, "that when I confessed in a rather confident letter the danger and the scruple in my heart, he refused to hear of it and did not grow in the slightest alarmed. And now, after a long absence, after my very evident negligence and infidelity of affection, he decides suddenly to become ridiculously jealous."

Though Adèle's senses were calm and her heart was full of

affection, she had lost those "mysterious apathies" which formerly lulled her sensibility. Rest had fled from her. "Charles," she begged Sainte-Beuve one day; "leave me; go travelling. I am so weary."

But Sainte-Beuve would not hear of it. "Oh, how intolerant and painful is human love when it is left to its own course."

Another time, exhausted by the struggle and fearful for her frail heart, Adèle spoke to her husband: "I want you to be at peace, Victor, and therefore I beg you never again to leave me alone with Sainte-Beuve."

Victor bent over the dark hair, sealed this pact of affection with a kiss; and suddenly he was seized by an obsessive, tormenting, frightening thought: "Has Adèle any reasons to fear the visits of Sainte-Beuve? Is not Adèle sure of herself?"

Thereafter Sainte-Beuve found Victor always present at his meetings with Adèle. He remembered then that she had begged him to go away, and he determined to leave. At the time of his visit to Brussels, Charles Rogier had promised that he could secure for him a chair of French literature in the University of Liége. In order to be certain of the appointment, Sainte-Beuve had agreed to become a naturalised Belgian. On the fourth of May he wrote requesting immediate installation at the university, "with the certainty of a ministerial appointment following his naturalisation." Once again suffering purified him and inclined him to Christianity.

"Go to see Monsieur Féli," counselled Adèle. And during the first fortnight in July he actually went into retreat at Juilly, with Lamennais.

"Learn to will, to will powerfully," his spiritual director advised him. "Try to anchor your drifting life; try not to let yourself be borne on every wind like a wisp of dry grass."

It was Lamennais who orientated him towards St. Augustin and the Port-Royal, and who dictated the rule of conduct which we read in *Volupté:* "I am not of those, you know, who would deny the presence of a Beatrice to every mortal pilgrim."

As a sort of echo to the affectionate exhortations of Mon-

sieur Féli, Sainte-Beuve asked Adèle to join him in "transferring together their love to religion." Thus once more there reigned over them that "sentiment superior to all others" which Balzac was one day to paint magnificently in *The Seamy Side of Contemporary History:* "The love of soul for soul, that immense, infinite sentiment born of Catholic charity."

At the end of May, Sainte-Beauve had his appointment to Liége. Will he leave? Adèle seemed resigned to it, and Victor felt his heart grow light. Bertin, the editor-in-chief of the *Débats*, was looking forward to a visit from the Hugo family at his country place near Bièvres. His daughter Louise, who was advised by Berlioz, thought of writing a libretto for the *Opéra* upon *Notre-Dame de Paris.* Among the roses blooming in June, and in the shadows of the charming valley of the Bièvre they could talk at ease of a ballet for *Esmeralda.* The Hugos left Paris, with the assurance that when they returned Sainte-Beuve would be gone, Sainte-Beuve would be at Liége.

"Au revoir, Sainte-Beuve."

"Good-bye, Victor; look after those headaches. Good-bye, Didine. Good-bye, Dédé. My respects, Madame."

Will Sainte-Beuve leave? Victor Hugo hoped so. Their stay at Bièvres, the grace of these limpid waters in which, ten years before, at Gentilly, they had seen the reflection of their youthful love, the mild air of the golden days and the blue nights, the distance which separated them from the friend now become the adversary, reunited Victor and Adèle and invited them to reanimate the coals of the high flame glowing under the ashes. In the proud joy of his reconquest of his beloved wife, Victor Hugo, for the first time, forgot to be generous to the rival who had vanished and left him a free field. He proclaimed his triumph in a letter with which he sent the verses of François de Neufchâteau which he had promised Sainte-Beuve, a letter ending in this cock-crow: "We are so happy here that we have no notion when we shall leave. My wife is charmed, gay, wondrously happy, and in excellent health."

Adèle, then, was not in tears, was not suffering, was not growing thin in the time of his exile. Victor's last lines, which were rather curt, seemed to emphasize the insolence of his triumph: "Do not forget to write to me from Liége. Ever yours, Victor."

This was the recompense gained by Sainte-Beuve's sacrifice. She had wept; she had proclaimed herself ill; she had begged him to leave. He had agreed to immolate himself, to give up his nationality. And here she was, "charmed, gay, wondrously happy, in excellent health."

Would Sainte-Beuve still leave? "Do not forget to write to me from Liége," Victor had insisted. In the meantime, Sainte-Beuve wrote from Paris saying that, giving way to the advice of his friends, he had decided not to go to Liége.

A thunderclap in a cloudless sky! Victor was to expiate that chant of triumph. Sainte-Beuve was not leaving! What mattered genius, what mattered fame? One heart alone bled and sobbed: a poor man lay prone. Adèle too had read Sainte-Beuve's letter. She seemed stricken, infinitely unhappy. They could not stay with strangers, however friendly, in this state. Back they went to Paris to defend themselves, to learn what he was about. Hugo's next letter to Sainte-Beuve had not the tone of triumph of the first. No longer was he firm and masterly: now he begged, and his letter was a poignant avowal of his misery and his jealousy:

"6th July 1831

"What I have to write you, dear friend, is deeply painful to me, but it must be written. Your departure for Liége would have spared me this, which will explain to you why I seemed to desire something which, ordinarily, would have been a great misfortune. Since you are not leaving—and I agree that you may have good reasons not to leave—I must unburden my heart to you, though it be perhaps for the last time. I can no longer endure a state of affairs which would continue indefinitely if you remain in Paris.

"I do not know if your thoughts have been as bitter as

mine, but these past three months of half-intimacy, ill resumed and repatched, have not been a success. All that held us together was our old and ineradicable friendship. When you are not present, I feel at the bottom of my heart that I love you as I always have loved you; but when you are present, I am tortured. You know that we are no longer at ease with one another; we are no longer the two brothers we were. You are no longer mine; I am no longer yours. There is something between us. And when we are in the same room, seated on the same sofa, close enough to touch one another, the feeling that overcomes me is frightful. When two people are two hundred leagues apart, however, they think it is those two hundred leagues which separate them: that is why I said to you 'go.'

"You must understand all this, Sainte-Beuve. Where is our confidence, our mutual unbosoming, our freedom of movement, our inexhaustible conversation without mental reservation? All gone. Everything between us now tortures me. The very obligation, imposed upon me by a person whom I cannot name in this letter, to be always present when you are there, tells me constantly and cruelly that we are no longer the friends we were. My poor friend, there is something absent in your presence that makes it even more unbearable for me than your absence itself. The vacuum would then at least be complete.

"For this reason I propose that we stop seeing one another, so that we may not stop loving one another. Has your wound healed? I cannot say. What I can say is that mine has not. Every time I see you, it bleeds. You must have felt that I had changed. It is because I suffer when I am with you; and that irritates me, first with myself, and then most of all with you, my poor dear friend; and finally with another person, whose wish I am also perhaps expressing in this letter.

"Let us now stop seeing one another in order that some day, and as soon as possible, we may begin again to see one another for the rest of our lives. We shall have pretexts enough for explanation to others: the distance between our

quarter and your part of town, our presence in the country in summer, the fact that I am never at home, and so on. As for you and me, we shall know where we stand. We shall continue to love one another. There is no reason why we should not write one another. When we meet somewhere it will be with pleasure, and we shall shake hands with more tenderness than here. What do you say to this? Write me a note about it.

"I shall stop here. Be merciful to these random notions. This letter has made me suffer, my friend. Burn it, so that no one may ever read it.

"Good-bye. Your friend and your brother, Victor."

"I have given this letter to read to the only person besides you who has the right to read it."

This time Sainte-Beuve answered by return post. He accepted Victor's terms, which the tranquillized friendship of the poet was one day to rescind, but he protested that he had never seen Madame Hugo alone—a protest which is suspect, since there is no question of this in Victor's letter. And he tried to pull the wool over his friend's eyes by insisting that while a charming woman was in truth the reason which held him in Paris, that woman was not Adèle. "If you supposed that I had a more secret and more magnetic reason, it must have been easy for you to grasp the key to the mystery and apply it elsewhere."

It is not to be denied that he had been moved by Victor's letter. The suffering of a friend whom he had so lately admired and loved drew even from him a cry of pain:

"Besides which, my friend, I must tell you that I felt no irritation with your letter, which overwhelmed and afflicted me so greatly. I have one bitter regret, which is to have been the chopping block of such a friendship as yours, the blade broken off in the wound you bear; and I can only blame fate by way of absolving myself of this charge that I am the deadly instrument at work upon a great heart. . . ."

It is hard to believe that, having been cast out with tears, but cast out just the same, he "felt no irritation" and con-

ceived no bitterness. Underlying the flattery in poor taste with which he closes his letter is a hidden threat, a sort of sombre prophecy, which seems to say: Beware! You drive me from your door, but how certain are you, with all your fame, that you will not be the first to lose your happiness by showing yourself unworthy of it? This was one occasion on which the author of the *Consolations* might well have been the comforter.

His tortuous and enigmatic language was somewhat disquieting, but Victor Hugo was not a man to see traps set for him. His friend gave way; his friend was suffering; his friend had accused him of forging chimeras: therefore he found it natural to excuse and justify him; and with all his generous and tormented heart the strong man abased himself, the proud man humbled himself. Poor great man, poor archangel, too high of soul, far too pure for this world of slime:

"You are right in everything you say; your conduct has been fair and perfect; you have wounded no one, nor could wound any one. It is all in my poor, unhappy imagination, my friend. I love you at this moment more than ever, and, without the least exaggeration, hate myself for a fool and a madman. My life is yours whenever it can be of service to you, and I shall consider its sacrifice for you a small thing. Let me say something to you *only;* I am no longer a happy man. I have become convinced that it was possible that she who had all my love might have ceased to love me, and that for a very little, you might have accomplished this. However often I repeat to myself all that you have written, and tell myself that this very thought is madness, this drop is still enough to poison all my life. Yes, you may pity me: I am truly unhappy. I know no longer where I stand between the two beings I love most in life. You are one of the two. Pity me, love me, write me. And I shall live in anticipation of the blessed day when we shall meet again."

Sainte-Beuve, too, lived in anticipation of this "blessed day." He knew how sensitive to praise Hugo was; and he was plan-

ning to devote his first article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* to Hugo's *Feuilles d'automne*. Incidentally, it was Hugo who had introduced him to Buloz, the owner of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. They agreed to meet at the home of friends, or even in a restaurant. Sainte-Beuve attended the opening performance of *Marion de Lorme*, and his applause arose with that of Young France. He was impatient for the rescission of Hugo's decision, impatient to see Adèle again. She, meanwhile, had undergone many trials since the birth of her third daughter. She was exasperated by the jealous rages of a husband whose embraces she sought to avoid, and unhappy not to be consoled by the friend whom so often she had comforted. Torn in body and soul, she sat alone at home and never left the rue Jean-Goujon. And who shall say that Othello was not sequestering his Desdemona?

On the fourth of September, Sainte-Beuve decided formally to give up his chair at the University of Liége. "Since the last letter which I had the honour to write you," he informs Monsieur Lebroussart, "I must have seemed to you very slow to decide either to come to you or to communicate to you the reasons for my delay. During all this time entirely private and personal circumstances, which in the beginning had inspired in me a lively desire to live and assume an honourable position in your beautiful country, have changed more happily than the public situation for us all. . . ." These "private and personal circumstances" were the secret correspondence which he was now carrying on with Adèle. On the very day of his letter to Monsieur Lebroussart, Sainte-Beuve was sending consolatory verses to Madame Hugo. And still the interdiction had not been raised. Adèle remained invisible. She had not even attended the first performance of *Marion de Lorme*. Thus, despite all the advances made by way of putting Victor's suspicions to sleep, crafty and powerful hatred made its way into Sainte-Beuve's heart, and one day, in the course of a conversation with Fontaney, it burst forth:

"How is Victor?" asked Fontaney.

"He is a wretch. His pride has made him jealous, and his wife is ill of it. There is really nothing at the bottom of his soul but granite, iron. Yes, I love Adèle; I still love her passionately."

"Do you see one another?"

"No, I am myself sequestered. We talked the matter out, then exchanged some rather lively letters; and absence has not changed us. Read La Rochefoucauld on love. And thereafter, for the good of my mind, I took up politics, became a Saint-Simonian. I was called back at the beginning of the year, then banished again for ever."

"And Adèle?"

"Adèle is under lock and key. I tell you: we never see one another. It would take sword blows and bloodshed to bring us together again."

But there were no sword blows. A few weeks later, when *Feuilles d'automne* appeared, Sainte-Beuve received a copy with this inscription: "To his good and faithful friend Sainte-Beuve, V. H." On the 15th of December, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Sainte-Beuve did full justice to the poet. But was he thinking only of Victor when he contrasted "the fresh confidence of yore" with the "mystical idolatry of a single veiled being"?

On the eighteenth of December 1831, his former classmate, the abbé Barbe, received these altogether different lines from Sainte-Beuve: "I have had much grief in these last months, the kind of grief that one avoids only by standing guard early enough. *I have finally felt the passion which I had hitherto only glimpsed and desired. It is still with me, fixed in me,* and this has drawn into my life many necessities, much bitterness mingled with sweetness, and a duty of sacrifice which has its good effect, but is a costly business for human nature."

True, his passion was *fixed.* Romance-loving Adèle was weak and heedless. Under colour of religion, of charity, she had just agreed to a secret meeting in a church.

"How your solitude must have weighed upon you?" he said.

Wrapped in a thick veil, she shook her head: "I do not recall that I was ever bored, for I have always lived in a world of my own."

"My young *fiancée!*"

"A *fiancée* with white hair."

"Which does not prevent your being beautiful and having the waist of a girl of fifteen."

Thereafter, for many months, they met in the obscurity of old chapels, protected against themselves by the divinity which fell from the age-old windows. If not in church, they would meet in the cemetery, beside the grave of Madame Foucher where Sainte-Beuve had long ago wept with Adèle. And when they left either church or graveyard it was to bring help to the unfortunate. Thus the religion of the living God, the religion of the dead, alms, and charity, guaranteed the purity of their love.

Thirty years later, when he had reached the age of cynicism, Sainte-Beuve, in a letter to Hortense Allart de Méritens, was to maintain, by way of proving himself a *roué*, that this mysticism was but a mask, one of those cloudy metamorphoses which permit the gods to approach the daughters of men: "I have practiced Christian mythology in my time. It has since evaporated. Like Leda's swan, I found it a way to get close to young women and spin a tenderer web of love. Youth has time enough for all of its tricks. . . ." This old fellow, tormented by his ancient libido, is not to be believed. The Sainte-Beuve of 1832 was sincere. For the first and last time in his life he was in love with all the strength of his soul. He was in love, and the great secret was confided to the novel he wrote, *Volupté*. For a long time already, two beings were in possession of his heart and his flesh. As Madame de Couaën was loved by Amaury, so was sweet, kind, asensual Adèle loved with a passionate but extremely pure love by Sainte-Beuve. Adèle was unconscious of the desires which tormented him. She knew in him only the friend of her soul, the mystical lover to whom she was able to speak of her dead mother, her troubled

home, her disappointments, fears, . . . and jealousies. For he had less trouble to remain worthy of so pure a love than one might suppose, and has himself confessed that he had organised his life into two parts. It was not to her that he looked for his pleasures. The great crisis of 1830 had taught him to feed the carnal fires which tormented him by excursions into the lowest forms of pleasure. These sacrifices to the Venus of the street-corners had rendered him more apt for the veneration of his Madonna. He was one of those men—they are more numerous than we realise—who would blush to bring to the beloved the trivial homage of the flesh. For this reason, Madame Hugo, so mild of heart, innocent of desire, and pious of spirit, could see in Sainte-Beuve the most passionate, but almost the most reserved, of friends, and the victim of an unjust proscription. Why not, this being so, agree to meet this most platonic of lovers in a church or a cemetery, and visit the poor by his side? If she had known what Sainte-Beuve left on coming to her, when they fell together to their knees in the peaceful shadow of the same sanctuary! It was not long, however, before she was to read this confession of a soul that savoured with pride the secret perversion of its duality: "After that fatal day, the impure stream once crossed, a powerful element was introduced into my being. My long constrained youth overflowed; my unbridled senses sought their satisfaction; my dual life came into being: on the one side, an inferior life, submerged and sunken; on the other, a more active life of the head and the heart."

What a monstrous complexity, but also what sincerity in this etching whose light is blotted with shadow: "And this heart which had palpitated so violently in evil; this human, contradictory, and changing heart of which we may say as the poet said of the Centaur that 'two natures lived in it'; this deplorable heart, shook off shame in an instant. It took up its alternative rôle and of a sudden emerged from coarse convulsion into platonic inspiration."

For, "she, she alone remained for me the incomparable being,

the radiant and inaccessible goal, the perfect and ideal good. The more I felt the gnawing flood separate us, the more my need of affection and adoration brought me back to share in her life. . . . I could enjoy her intimacy the more boldly since I was sure of the possession of my destructive life-preserver. At the slightest hint of boredom, the least excess of emotion, whether of distaste or of ardour, I went, I ran, to squander my momentary impulse, and returned in peace, believing myself insensible at her feet."

Her innocence is unquestionable, and the few malicious verses written for another woman and inserted later in Sainte-Beuve's *Livre d'amour* cannot convince us otherwise. He himself proclaimed their innocence:

From the love with which you love me I have never drawn
Either vanity or voluptuousness.

That other Adèle, his little godchild, continued to serve as a supreme hyphen between the two old friends. In July 1832, Hugo sent her to call on her godfather; a gesture which invited Sainte-Beuve to display himself in a better light:

You alone, sacred child, attach me to him;
In you I love him still, and all shadows of hate
Withdraw in the memory brought by your presence. . . .

Le Roi s'amuse

Towards the end of October, Victor Hugo and his family were living in an old house on the Place Royale, where tradition reports that Marion de Lorme lived. They moved in on the eve of the first performance of *le Roi s'amuse:*

"Pity me first and most of all," Victor Hugo wrote to Louise Bertin, "for having left your country home, and thereafter for the fact that this past week has been spent in moving. For a week I have lived in the midst of chaos, nailing, hammering, looking like a thief. It is terrible. To this, add that I have to attend rehearsals, and that I cannot even go to see

the portrait" (of her father) "at Ingres'. This is fearfully written, but I can only write nowadays in the style of a carpet-layer.

"I am being played from the twelfth to the fifteenth of November."

The carpet-layer went out to attend the dress rehearsal of *le Roi s'amuse*. After the *Ça ira* of the Revolution, we had the *Marseillaise* and the *Carmagnole*. It began well. The days of *Hernani* were ended; the battle was no longer a literary one. A few months earlier shots had been fired in the streets and the troops had to take the Saint-Merri Cloister barricades by assault. On the previous Monday, towards two in the afternoon, a pistol shot had been fired at Louis-Philippe. This evening the ladies and gentlemen of fashion who came to attend *le Roi s'amuse* were greeted with revolutionary songs by the students, daubers, and ragged Republicans in the audience. They arrived at four o'clock, recruited by Nanteuil, Gautier, Devéria, Du Seigneur, and Borel. Once again the paying audience, the Philistines and Academicians, the ladies in grand attire, drew back before the mingled odours of pipes, cigars, cheese, and garlic-filled sausage. It was the jeers of these people of fashion, these classicists, these ladies of the noble Faubourg Saint-Germain, which released the storm and sent the incendiary flame of the old Terrorist refrains rippling from stall to stall and gallery to gallery.

When the curtain rose the songs ended and the sounds in the boxes died away; but the silence which followed was a silence of ice. On this Thursday, the twenty-second of November 1832, the *Comédie Française* became Siberian. One scene only, that of Saint-Vallier, in which grey hairs are deemed as worthy of respect as a crown, superbly delivered by Joanny, warmed the atmosphere somewhat. The *claques* remembered that they had been without effect on the occasion of *Hernani* and their arms hung idly at their sides; but Young France applauded in frenzy.

"That settles it: You've given yourselves away. You have

applauded," those who were in the boxes called out, determined to have their revenge.

The curtain fell, but from all over the house came the sound of stamping feet, and the voices of those who were ridiculing their enemies to the tune of *Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre:*

L'Académie est morte,
Mironton-ton-ton mirontaine,
L'Académie est morte,
Est morte et enterrée.

Ligier's delivery of Triboulet's monologue in the second act was a triumph, but the end of that act went badly. Marot left out the two lines

You may cry aloud and tread with heavy foot,
For he is now made blind as well as deaf;

as a result of which the audience could not understand why Triboulet did not see the ladder by his wall nor hear the cries of his daughter. Moreover, Blanche was carried off so awkwardly by a supernumerary that Mademoiselle Anaïs (who played the part) hung with her head down and her legs in the air, so that the classicists were purple with delighted laughter. The fall of the curtain was greeted by a hail of catcalls.

The boxes cried out in astonishment when the curtain rose on the third act.

"Monsieur de Rastignac," said the Duchess de Langeais; "do look at the strange costume they've put on Francis the First."

The young man of fashion essayed to defend it: "Dear duchess, the king is wearing 'magnificent informal morning dress.' Châtillon copied that costume from the bass-viol player in Veronese's *Wedding at Cana.*"

"Even so."

Paolo Veronese, Châtillon, and Hugo were hooted, and from then on the catcalls never ceased. In the last act the door through which the king was to make his exit would not open.

That was the last straw. After this performance the author went home without an admiring escort, under a pouring rain. The next day *le Roi s'amuse* fell under the censor's ban.

The Fire-bird

Victor Hugo met her on the second of January 1833 at an artists' ball:

> She came and went like a bird of fire
> Inflaming by her presence more than one soul . . .
> You gazed, and dared not approach her.

So wrote Hugo of her and of his first sight of her. He did not approach her; he fled her. Three years of life back stage had lent him no assurance; he had remained the lover of one woman alone, his wife, even though she had given her heart to another, even though, broken in heart and body, she had denied herself to his caresses. And now slowly, unbeknown to himself, he was being disarmed and delivered over to those voluptuous surprises from which his pure and burning youth had so long been preserved.

Mademoiselle Juliette was twenty-seven years old. Her true name was Juliette-Joséphine Gauvain. She was a foundling, and had taken the name of Lieutenant René-Henri Drouet, who had adopted her. Her birthplace was Fougères, that strong, crafty old Breton town inhabited by Balzac's *Chouans;* but she had grown up in the austere shadow of a Parisian convent, under the guidance of the Benedictines of the Perpetual Adoration, on the edge of the rue des Postes, across from the rue des Vignes. There, on the Montagne Sainte-Geneviève, stood the true Petit-Picpus of *les Misérables* which Victor was to describe after hearing Juliette's account of her convent life.

Despite her upbringing, she was a daughter of her time, as the Archbishop of Paris, Monsignor de Quélen, well saw when he encouraged her to leave the convent. Since then, there was no counting the men who had crossed her path: Pradier, the sculptor from Geneva by whom she had a child; Alphonse

Karr; the painter, Séchan; and Prince Demidoff, who maintained her luxuriously.

It was this beautiful courtesan whom Victor saw on the night of the second of January 1833. A few days later *Lucrèce Borgia* went into rehearsal at the Porte-Saint-Martin. This play in prose, the language of Monsieur Jourdain, of the vulgar middle classes, caused a great stir among the romantics. The *ateliers* stormed and looked with displeasure upon it.

Frédérick Lemaître played Gennaro, Mademoiselle George was the opulent Lucrèce, and the Princess Negroni was played by the Fire-bird. She had only a few lines to speak, but that satisfied her. After her first meeting with the poet she had asked Harel, the manager of the Porte-Saint-Martin if she could not have "a little part in one of Monsieur Victor Hugo's plays." During rehearsal she had eyes only for the author. Was he going to make it possible for her to obtain the wish she had expressed in her sixteenth year: "To become the passionate companion of a decent man"? But he seemed indifferent to her. Courteous and respectful as he was with all women, he took particular pains not to *tutoyer*—to use the familiar "thee" and "thou"—the actresses.

"I could die laughing," said Lemaître, "when I see Monsieur Hugo kiss Juliette's hand on saying good-bye."

For her part, this coolness stimulated her to excite his attention and to make herself as seductive as possible. In the last act, when Maffio says to her: "Love is not enough to fill the heart, Madame," her cue is to ask him: "But Heavens! What is it that fills the whole heart." And every time, without waiting for him to reply, she would turn towards the poet, and her loving gaze would seek in his fascinated eyes the answer: "Love."

The play opened in triumph on the second of February. Never had Hugo been greeted with such delirium. When he came away from the theatre the young men unharnessed his horses and drew him themselves to the Place Royale, surrounded

by a frenzied, singing cohort. This time the rout of the classicists was complete.

Mademoiselle George had been sublime as Lucrèce, but the dazzling image that lay at the bottom of Victor's heart was the Princess Negroni. In her damask gown stitched with silver, in the full wings of her silken sleeves, its bows and ribbons; in her crown of pearls and plumes, Juliette had more than ever been the Fire-bird. It was hard to pity the guests who took their cups of poison from so beautiful a hand.

The next day, in the garret where Victor took refuge from importunate callers, he wove for the Fire-bird this garland:

"There are, in *Lucrèce Borgia,* certain minor parts played at the Porte-Saint-Martin by actors of the first order, who comport themselves, in the twilight of their rôles, with perfect grace, taste, and loyalty. The author is grateful to them. Among these, the public was particularly charmed by Mademoiselle Juliette. It can scarcely be said of the Princess Negroni that hers is a rôle: it is rather a sort of apparition, a young, beautiful, fateful and passing figure which raises a corner of the sombre veil that covered Italy at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Mademoiselle Juliette cast an extraordinary glow over this figure. She had few words to speak, but she read into them much thought. Here is an actress who, given the opportunity, will emphatically reveal to the public a talent full of soul, passion, and truth."

And in his notebooks he wrote: "How pretty, how beautiful, she is! What a figure, what superb shoulders, what a charming profile! What a charming actress, what a reserved and distinguished bearing! Her intentions and expressions are so right, and her emotions so deep! She feels keenly. Her voice and manner are somewhat like Madame Dorval's, but what difference in simplicity and soul! Give her one year of experience, and she will be perfect, will be our leading character actress. What a sense of mute play, what a soul!"

Gautier confirms this estimate of Juliette, and to him we owe this medallion of the Princess Negroni:

"Mademoiselle Juliette's head is of regular and delicate beauty. Her nose is pure, well cut, and well profiled. Her eyes are limpid and sparkling; her mouth is lively, moist, and red, and it remains small however gay and mad her laughter. All these charming traits are surrounded by a suave and harmonious oval contour. Her brow, which is as clear and serene as the marble pediment of a Greek temple, provides a luminous crown for her delicate face, while her abundant, gleaming black hair brings out marvellously the diaphanous glow of her face.

"The throat, the shoulders, and the arms have the perfection of antiquity and are worthy of inspiring our sculptors. They would have been admitted into the trial of beauty in which the women of Athens let fall their veils before Praxiteles meditating his Venus. . . ."

This young Athenian of the time of Louis-Philippe was not long to delay the unwinding of her veils before the poet she admired. On the evening of Mardi Gras, the nineteenth of February, she stood watching at her window. She lived at 19, boulevard Saint-Denis: it was not the masked crowd in this thoroughfare that interested her. What she was waiting and hoping to see was a virile and robust silhouette in a severely cut frock coat and black silk hat. They had been lovers since Sunday, hurried lovers, since they had been forced to content themselves with the dressing room put at their disposal by Mademoiselle George. Juliette and her poet were now going to dine together and go thereafter to the *Théâtre du Gymnase*, to one of those balls where the beautiful Fire-bird could spread her wings. And yet they did not dance that night; they wanted that night for themselves, the night that was to join them for half a century. Eight years later Hugo was to recall for her these unforgettable hours: "Do you remember, my beloved, our first night? It was Carnival night in . . . 1833. We were to have gone together to some ball or other, in I know not what theatre. Nothing, not even death, I am sure, will blot that memory out of my mind. All the hours of that night make

their way through my thoughts while I write, as stars might pass before the eye of my soul. Yes, you were to have gone to the ball, but you did not go; you waited for me. Poor angel, how much beauty and love you have! Your little room was filled with an adorable silence. Outside we heard Paris laugh and sing and saw the masks pass with loud cries. While the great Carnival went on, we stood apart and hid our own celebration in the shadows. Paris enjoyed a false intoxication; we, the true.

"Never forget, my angel, that mysterious hour which changed your life. That night was a symbol, a figuration of the great and grave thing which went on within you. That night you put aside, left far behind you, all tumult, all noise, all false glitter, and entered into mystery, solitude, and love."

Later, at the National Assembly on the twentieth of February 1849, Victor Hugo evoked his return through the rain after their night of love:

"You are right; this day too is a sweet and charming anniversary. I shall never forget the morning when I left you, my heart dazzled. Day was dawning. The rain was coming down in a torrent. The ragged and dirtied maskers were coming from the Courtille with loud shouts, flooding the boulevard du Temple. They were drunk, and I was too: they with wine, I with love. Rising above their roaring voices I could hear the song in my heart. I could not see these spectres about me, these ghosts of dead joy, phantoms of extinguished orgy: I saw only you, a sweet shadow radiant in the night, your eyes, your brow, your beauty, and your smile as intoxicating as your kisses. That morning was glacial and rainy in the sky, but warm and radiant in my heart. It all comes back to me now in the midst of this other mob of maskers called the National Assembly, which, like the first is made up of phantoms. . . ."

After the seventeenth of February 1833, the poet abandoned the Place Royale. So long as he was there his mind was absent, his heart empty. His soul was elsewhere, and while

the incense rose towards him from the young men and young women about him, he had thought only for the clock, awaiting the blessed hour of their meeting on the boulevard Saint-Denis. The life of the theatre had enfranchised him. On the pretext of rehearsals he lunched out every day; and when there were no rehearsals at the Porte-Saint-Martin and the sky was blue, the lovers wandered in delight through the countryside about Paris. Under her rose-flowered bonnet Juliette, as gay as Mimi Pinson, took Victor's arm and went on a tour of discovery of Montrouge and Montmartre, Saint-James and Meudon, Fontainebleau, Saint-Germain, and Versailles. How young they were! as young as true lovers. One evening, on the shore of the Lake of Enghien, as they sat under an arbour, Juliette cried out:

"Something in your napkin, Victor!"

He stooped over, picked up a bit of paper folded in four, and read delightedly: "I acknowledge the receipt from Monsieur Victor Hugo of a great deal of love, a great deal of happiness, and a great deal of devotion, which I agree to repay at sight. Signed: Juliette."

"Quickly! Serve us quickly!" the poet ordered. That evening they gulped down their food. Victor was in such haste for the payment of his note!

One summer day, while his family were away, Victor gave way to Juliette's persuasion and took her to his home on the Place Royale. She left it in great anguish and wrote him that same evening these lines: "Do you know how charming you were to open your home to me? You satisfied something in me greater than mere curiosity, and I thank you for having shown me the place where you live and love and think. But my dear beloved, I must be sincere with you and tell you that I came away very sad and frightfully discouraged. I now feel so much more how far apart we are and how foreign I am to you. It is not your fault, my beloved, nor is it mine. It is just that it *is* so, and I should be mad to exaggerate your part in

my unhappiness; but I do feel myself the most miserable of women.

"If you feel any pity for me, dearest love, you will help me up from this bowed and humiliating posture which torments both my mind and my heart. Help me to arise, my good angel, so that I may have faith in you and in the future.

"I beg it of you, I beg it!"

And another time she wrote him: "I need you, I need only you, I cannot live without you."

After a most painful dispute, Juliette, in her sorrow, burned the first letters written her by her poet; but the memory of this destruction is obliterated by the tenderness and beauty of the lines this gesture drew from him.

"You have burned my letters, my Juliette, but you have not destroyed my love. It is still whole, and as vivid in my heart as on the first day we met. I know how much pain and generosity and love was in your soul when you destroyed those letters. They contained all my heart, all that I have ever written that was true and profoundly sincere. They were my entrails, my blood, my life and thoughts for six months, the trace of you in me, the passage, the furrow cut long before, of your existence in mine. And because of a word of mine which you misinterpreted and which never had the unjust meaning you lent it, you destroyed all this! I have groaned more than once over it, but I have never accused you of it. My beautiful soul, my angel, my poor dear Juliette, I understand you and I love you.

"Yet I do not wish this trace of you in me to become forever lost. I want it to remain; I want it to be found again when we two shall be dust, when the revelation of it shall no longer be able to break the heart of anyone. I want it known that I have loved you, that I have esteemed you, have kissed your feet, have had a heart full of worship and adoration of you. For, in the eight months during which my eyes have looked constantly to the bottom of your soul I have never yet seen in it any thought, any feeling, unworthy of you or of me.

"More than once I have been unhappy about your life, my poor misunderstood angel, but I tell you in the joy of my heart: If ever a heart was good, simple, and devoted, it is yours; if ever love was complete, deep, tender, passionate, inexhaustible, infinite, it is mine.

"I kiss the beautiful soul that gleams on your brow. Victor."

Indeed, when he was not torn by violent jealousy, he was consoling her with sublime words, with the most beautiful poems of love ever inspired by a daughter of men.

Consolations

One chill day in November 1833, a young woman wrapped in a great cloak and carefully veiled, walked through the rue des Lions. From time to time she turned her head. There was no one in this deserted street. Her beautiful dark eyes rose towards a tower at the corner of the rue Saint-Paul where a curtain fluttered as if it were a signal. The trusted friend and confidant of so many humiliations, so much sadness and anger, was there.

Madame Victor Hugo was at the end of her strength. She dropped into an armchair and wept. The insidious, low-voiced author of the *Consolations* bent over her. "Yesterday," he said, "I heard a woman deign to pity your abandonment by a noble husband ravished from you by Phryne."

She answered through her tears: "Every evening when the time comes for him to leave, I cannot take my eyes from the clock. I should like to stop its hand."

"Patience. I saw Victor the day after the opening of *Marie Tudor*. He seemed to me exasperated. What a failure! Juliette was beneath even herself and was driven by hisses from the stage. She had to turn over her part to Ida Ferrier. And besides, there's Demidoff, and Karr, and Séchan. And all the debts to be paid. It cannot go on."

A long silence. Then the tranquillizing voice began again

like the psalmody of a priest in a sanctuary. But there are bad priests!

"I said to myself yesterday: 'How all that was beautiful, flourishing, and great a few years ago has fallen!' Victor, the author of *Her Name* and *To Thee* at the feet of Juliette. All our poets prone, all our angels fallen. We alone, Adèle, have followed and accomplished our destiny. Let us cling closely together, dearest angel, and love one another till death. I love you!"

The sorrowing woman stood up. Evening fell, an evening of winter and of distress.

Their Bird Life

Despite an engagement at the *Comédie Française* which, indeed, she was never to fill, Juliette, who had resolved to belong only to one man, had been expulsed from her new apartment in the rue de l'Echiquier. Her furniture had been sold at auction, her jewels and clothing were pawned. Feeling herself ruined, overwhelmed by Victor's jealousy (for he could not forget her past), she tried to kill herself; but death would not have her. On the third of August 1834, she fled to Saint-Renan, near Brest, where her elder sister lived. Nevertheless the lovers still wrote desperately to one another. Their love would not, could not, die. In order to save her, Victor collected by a mighty effort a thousand or so of francs and went to fetch her.

It was true that his jealousy had broken, destroyed them. But what matter? He found words to touch her heart and make her forget, words bearing the sorrowful accent of passion: "How can you not see that all that I do, even the ill I cause you, comes out of my love?"

On the ninth of August, they were in one another's arms. In a notebook Victor wrote down their reciprocal promises:

"Brest, ninth August. It is seven in the evening. The weather is like our destiny: after a day of mist and storm, the

sun shone. The sky and the sea which were grey during our separation are blue and serene, and smile with me upon you. Beautiful soul, God loves you.

"Our reunion here was sealed by a solemn promise. Here our two lives have been fused forever. Let us ever remember what henceforth we owe to one another. What you owe me, I do not know; but what I owe you I know well—it is happiness.

"I am writing this during the twilight of a beautiful day. For our love, Juliette, there is no twilight."

From this day forth Didier was engaged in rehabilitating Marion. The forgiveness which Didier would never accord Marion is granted and received with infinite gratitude: "When I reach Didier's forgiveness," she wrote two years later after reading *Marion de Lorme,* "I suffocate with joy and gratitude, and it seems to me that already when you were writing this you loved me and forgave me my faults in advance while thinking of the love I was to feel for you.

"Bless you, my noble Victor. You did well to forgive me my shame; you did well to reach out your hand and raise me up from the gutter; you did well to wash away my pollution with the tears of my love. Thank you, angel; be blest in everything you love on earth.

"Marion is not to me a rôle; she is myself, ourselves, all that is most fervent, most loving, most virtuous in me. . . ."

The hour of redemption had sounded for this courtesan saved and purified by love. The poet was now to use his eyes, if not his genius, in order to pay off all the debts of the past. He was to say to her in an impulsive cry: "Heaven created my hands so that I may rebuild your half-crumbled life; my soul so that I may understand your heart; and my lips so that I may kiss your feet." In her humble lodging in the rue du Paradis where she now lived, Juliette learned to know and to accept passionately trouble and cold. In winter she would spend most of the day abed in order to economise fuel. Since her clothes had never been redeemed out of pawn, she

herself made what she wore: her satin skin had to endure the contact of coarse stuffs which she wore as the sackcloth of love. "My poverty," she was one day to write in a sort of mystical ecstasy, "my clumsy shoes, soiled curtains, iron spoons —the constant absence of all coquetry and of every pleasure foreign to our love, attest at every moment that I love you with every possible sort of love at once." Under that sackcloth she was soon to wear, as if it were a scapulary grown into her flesh, a precious bit of paper bearing a touching poem written in her defence:

Oh! never insult a woman who has fallen.

Her household work done, Victor's stockings and her own mended, she would set to work for him while waiting his coming: classify the articles written about him; copy his manuscripts; correct his proofs. At evening he would arrive, and once their voracious love was calmed, they would work side by side, she copying while he created. In the soft light of the lamp, a few feet from her bed, in this peaceful and secluded room which he called his workshop, many beautiful works were born. Juliette, wishing now and then not to be too entirely sacrificed to his books, would stop cutting, pasting, writing from time to time, and muse in the shadow.

He was still tormented by her past, and still frequently unjust to her; but she forgave him his jealousy and even his violence when she received lines such as these:

"Past midnight

". . . It is your fate to be my life or my death. I never loved you so much as yesterday, and this is the truth, despite the frenzy, the fury, the ferocity which I displayed. Forgive me. I have been a miserable madman, lost and cruel in my jealousy, beside myself with rage, with love. I do not know what I did, but I know so well that I love you.

"You are loved as no woman ever was before you, as none will be after you. I love you to death, to the point of killing



With inscription to Victor Hugo by Lincoln.

PORTRAIT OF LINCOLN

you. Do not complain overmuch of this. There is nothing better nor more beautiful under the sun than to be loved.

"Love me in the same way, and on the day when you make me bleed I shall kiss the hand that struck me. But no; none of that. We love one another. You will be happy. I am re-reading your letter. I am at your feet, in heaven."

All this despite, in summer and autumn they lived like schoolboys on holiday. The valley of the Bièvre which had seen the blossoming of the innocent idyll of Victor and Adèle, the happy valley where the poet and his wife had gone to visit the Bertins at Les Roches near Bièvres, celebrated in the *Feuilles d'automne* as the spot where "flowers which die early live longest"—this "charming and shaded valley" was now to know the warm, sensual and pathetic love of Juliette and Olympio. In July of 1834, Victor had brought her to this dear valley. The *Ecu de France*, an inn at Jouy-en-Josas, had sheltered their caresses; and on the next day the poet received this deposition:

"4th July 1834

"To my beloved,

"One thousand kisses.

"My beloved Victor, I am still overcome by last night; and since I have neither friend nor heart to understand and receive the overflow of my happiness, I write this: that 'yesterday, the third July 1834, at half past ten o'clock in the evening, in the inn of the *Ecu de France* at Jouy-en-Josas, I, Juliette, was the proudest and happiest woman in the world; and I declare moreover that until that hour I had never felt in its full plenitude the happiness of loving and being loved by you.'

"This letter, which reads like a deposition, is in truth a formal document written in witness of the state of my heart. This document, drawn to-day, shall serve for the rest of my life in this world. The day, the hour, the minute, on which it is presented to me, I agree to return my heart to the state in which it is to-day: that is, filled with one sole love which is thine, and one sole thought which is thine. Juliette."

"In witness whereof, the thousand kisses with which I have covered this letter."

Nor is he less tender, for he writes her very touchingly: "Heaven created my hands in order that I may rebuild your half-crumbled life, my soul in order that I may understand your heart, my lips in order that I may kiss your feet."

One day came forth this plaint that all lovers have uttered: "When one is in love, one must often live for tomorrow."

Victor came back from Brittany while his family were with the Bertins at Les Roches. He moved rapidly into the rue du Paradis; and in September, Victor and Juliette flew off to the valley of the Bièvre, where they were going to celebrate their "wedding of escaped birds."

At the hamlet of Les Metz, which is the highest point of Jouy-en-Josas, one league distant from the property of the Bertins, one Labussière let the young woman a room in the old lodge of the neighbouring château which belonged formerly to Cambacérès. The house was low, with only a garret over the ground floor, and over the white, blue-shuttered façade there roamed a rusty vine. At this point the garden and the steep orchards moved down hill towards the village beyond a gate opening on the Jouy road. He at Les Roches and she at Les Metz met half way between, for Dead Man's Wood offered many "chambers of foliage" in which to lead their "bird life." The road they preferred was that leading through the woods. Beyond Vauboyen, Victor would come to Dead Man's cross-roads and beyond that to the Cour-Roland crossroads. There, in the hollow of a century-old chestnut tree, Juliette would be waiting, and he would embrace her and the tree at once. From that tree they would move to the "chamber of foliage" which would put him in mind of Virgil, Lycoris, and Gallus. It was Juliette who guided him through the thickets, holding aside the branches while the poet followed and smiled at the imprint made by her little feet in the sandy earth. Farther on was a spring purling under the leaves, a spring soon to be hidden by a wall from passers-by, dreamers, and lovers.

One day they left Dead Man's Wood and walked into the undergrowth that climbs the hill to Verrières. Here too were many "chambers of foliage" and asylums of verdure lighted and coloured by the autumn season. Hidden in the brakes and the mosses, the lovers sat looking through the thin branches at the violet heights on the other bank. At their feet crouched the village of Bièvres. The sight of its old thatched and flat-tiled houses tempted them, as did the squat, modest old church. The angelus sounded. How good it must be to muse and pray in that pious shade! Victor and Juliette determined to leave their dear lovers' retreat, and hurried down the slope, towards the angelical peace before them, until they reached the church.

> It was a humble church, low-roofed,
> The church into which we went. . . .

In the shadow of the Bièvres church, Juliette felt the return of the years when, a foundling, she had been brought up by the good Benedictine ladies in the rue des Postes. The sweet monotonous prayers of old rose from her heart to her lips. Love, the religion of frail hearts, purified her and sent her to her knees. She prayed; she wept; she wept for her past and for her present. The waning season, the crepuscular hour, the sanctuary which so many generations had filled with their lamentations—all these things which raise up the soul to the heights, intensified cruelly her sense of the misery of her fall. Their "bird life" was to end the next day, and again would come solitude, confinement, waiting, and Paris in winter. The next day she would feel even more bitterly all that separated her from the being she passionately loved.

Meanwhile, he understood and measured his own impotence. There are times when the injustice of fate which favours man to the detriment of woman is not a thing to make man proud of himself. His consolation was confused, embarrassed, humble. But in the end he found words to calm and reassure her; and when, having left the church, the lovers separated, Juliette

watched with confidence the disappearance of her lover in the direction of Les Roches.

The following year, after three weeks in Normandy, they returned to dream and love in their dear valley. Juliette was back again at Les Metz with the Labussières; their hollowed chestnut, which served both as meeting place and as post box, was still there. One day they had to run to shelter from a downpour of rain. Juliette shivered in her thin frock. The poet took her on his knees and warmed and cheered her; and that even, she wrote him these lines: "I would not give this day, and most of all the moment when I was shivering with cold on your knees, for the most beautiful and radiant of our days of summer. It seems to me that this baptism under the sky, with love as sponsor, has regenerated us. All my life I shall remember my impression of the charm of rain drops dripping from your hair upon my neck. . . . You once said that I had revealed love to you: you have revealed to me nature, and through nature the grandeur and goodness of God. . . . There were rainbows in the sky, and rainbows also in our hearts. . . ."

In 1836, the lovers were unfaithful to the valley of Bièvres. They went to Fougères and to Mont Saint-Michel with Célestin Nanteuil, who passed as Juliette's brother. But the following year, 1837, saw them back at Les Metz. It was from Les Metz that Victor dated—post-dated, doubtless—the exquisite bucolic which Juliette found one day in the old chestnut tree:

Viens! une flûte invisible
Soupire dans les vergers. . . .

"Come! An invisible flute is sighing in the orchards. . . ."

But there was sadness, too, in discovering the changes wrought by men, by nature, and by time in the places where they had loved. Like Jean-Jacques and Lamartine, Victor Hugo was to celebrate the anxious poetry of memory and regret, on a blue and golden day in October 1837.

But our memories live as much as we ourselves live. Neither

the house at Les Metz nor the old chestnut tree had forgotten Juliette and Olympio. Eight years later, in September 1845, when they came back to Bièvres and were dropped by the mail coach at the inn of the *Soleil d'or* the dear past seized them, and they found things not so changed after all. In her straw hat trimmed with gilly-flowers, still very beautiful in a striped organdie frock, Juliette ran to the church, where she prayed with a less troubled, but not less touched, heart than eleven years before. They lunched with the hearty appetite of lovers at the *Chariot d'or;* and then walked past Les Roches and Vauboyen through Dead Man's Wood to Les Metz. On the way, they visited all their "chapels of love" and "made a devout halt at each of them." At Les Metz they had the pleasure of a surprise: nothing had changed. The Labussières were gone, but a little girl greeted them and served them as guide. Juliette clapped her hands: "The gate, the bell, the vegetable garden, the boundary stone where I used to sit to wait for you, the curtained bed, the wardrobe, the oak table! God took it upon himself to put a seal upon all these treasures of love which we hid here: He kept them for us."

Victor was mistaken: the house had remembered them. In her delirious joy Juliette, as soon as the child's back was turned, snipped off a bit of the rustic curtain. She loved relics, relics of love, and two days later she sent to Olympio this charming letter:

"I should have liked to walk in all the paths we took together eleven years ago, kiss all the stones on the way, greet all the leaves of the trees, gather all the flowers in the woods, so entirely did they seem to me the very ones we saw then. Nothing had changed within us or around us: the same warm, devoted, sweet and sad love was in our hearts, and the same autumn sun and sky were over our heads. . . . I should have given ten years of my life for ten minutes alone in that house which retained the memory of us so piously for eleven years. I should have liked to carry away some of the ash from the hearth, the dust off the floor. I should have liked to pray

and weep there where I prayed and wept. I should have liked to die of love in that place where so often I received your soul in a kiss. . . ."

"Date Lilia"

And what of Madame Victor Hugo? She had suffered, and then she had grown resigned. Sometimes secretly and sometimes publicly, Sainte-Beuve continued to see her. In August 1835, Léopoldine and her mother went down near Angers to attend the wedding of Victor Pavie. Sainte-Beuve met them there, overwhelmed them with kindness, and such were the purity and innocence of Adèle that she wrote these ingenuous lines to her absent husband: "When you are back in Paris, I hope you will send him a few lines of thanks for his goodness to us. . . ."

As a matter of fact, Victor Hugo's tenderness and respect for the "wife of his youth" were never to end. She herself, who was not ignorant of her own heart's frailty, displayed a sort of maternal indulgence towards him. When Victor lingered overlong with Juliette on the roads of Brittany, Adèle remained sweet and affectionate: "I do not want to say anything which might sadden you from afar, since I cannot be with you to console you. And besides, I believe you love me despite all this, and that you are enjoying yourself, since you linger on: and these two certainties make me happy, truly." He did love her "despite all this." He loved her with his heart in all purity, as she wished to be loved. She knew everything and forgave him. Her inner struggles had broken her. This woman of thirty-three already lived with the detachment of autumnal years. Was she still in love with him? That is another matter. Love is not so indulgent.

On the fifth of July 1839, while Victor was travelling in Brittany with Juliette and Nanteuil, she wrote to him: "Do not deny yourself anything. I need no pleasures: I need tranquillity. My tastes are those of an old woman, and I am sad

without sorrows. What more can one ask of life? I have only one desire in life: it is that those I love shall be happy. Happiness is no longer possible for me, and therefore I seek it for others. And despite everything, there is a good deal of comfort in this. So you see you are right when you say I have an indulgent smile. You may do anything you wish; provided you are happy, I shall be.

"Do not think that this means indifference. It is devotion, and detachment from life. Besides, I shall never abuse the rights over you given me by marriage. My idea is that you should be as free as a bachelor, since, poor dear, you were married when you were twenty, and I do not wish to chain you to a poor woman like me. At least what you give me, you will give me frankly and in all freedom. Do not, I say, torment yourself, and believe that nothing that I feel can change my affection for you, since I am solidly and completely devoted to you *nevertheless*.

"Your children are all well, and I embrace you. Be happy, very happy! Adèle Hugo."

Such generosity and beauty of soul awoke infinite gratitude in Victor, but they masked only thinly Adèle's immense distress. A few months earlier, in October 1835, Victor published his twilight songs, *Chants du crépuscule*. Among the poems inspired by Juliette the initiates discovered two which belonged entirely to his wife. One was a hymn of admiration and gratitude in which she was called "Eve tempted by no fruit." Another was the admirable *Date Lilia* in which Victor calls her "sister of my immortal soul; my pride, my hope, my shelter, my haven; . . . alabaster figure in my hidden house," and says that when he abandons himself to evil it is she alone who "can punish and pardon me."

To burn the same incense at the altar of the mistress and of the wife too is perhaps not in the best taste. But who will protest? Adèle? no. Sainte-Beuve. The storm broke in the *Revue des Deux Mondes:* "The twelve or thirteen elegiac love poems which form the middle section of this collection in its

truest and most sincere expression are followed by two or three others, in particular the last, entitled *Date Lilia*, whose aim seems to be to crown and protect the volume. . . . It is as if the poet, ending his book, had sought to fling a handful of lilies in our eyes. We regret that this precaution seemed to him necessary. Lack of literary tact . . . led him to introduce into his volume two colours which clash, two perfumes which fail to blend. He has failed to realise that the reader's impression would be that an object which he respects would have been more highly honoured and praised for being omitted. . . ."

When she read this, Adèle was not enchanted but consternated. She had already been wounded the year before by Sainte-Beuve's aggressive article on the *Study of Mirabeau*, and here he was, returning to the charge and making a tidbit for the public of her secret life as woman, wife, and mistress. Madame Victor Hugo might be weak enough to see Sainte-Beuve in secret; yet she had never ceased to love her husband. Victor Hugo's fame was in a measure her fame, and this Sainte-Beuve should have remembered. The keen psychologist had made a mistake. His extreme lyricism had ended by boring her, which was bad enough; but now he had spoken ill of her husband, had even written it: this was unforgivable. On the first of April 1834, Victor Hugo, disheartened by Sainte-Beuve's tactics, wrote him a letter in which he broke with him definitively:

"There are now so many hatreds and cowardly persecutions to be shared with me that I can understand that even the most tried of friendships may falter and retreat. Therefore farewell, my friend: let us, each for his part, and in silence, bury what has long been dead in you and what your letter has killed in me."

After the outburst in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Hugo was beside himself. Adèle's eyes were red, and Juliette bowed her head. The virtuous Sainte-Beuve, exasperated because Madame Hugo had turned away from him, went about everywhere

proclaiming: "Hugo's immorality is scandalous! It is true that I was at one time his friend. Which does not mean that I shouldn't be pleased to slap his face now."

Renduel, Hugo's publisher, repeated these words to the poet. A few days later Sainte-Beuve and Hugo met on neutral ground, at the Ministry for Education. Sainte-Beuve avoided his old friend, growling as he left: "I should have thrown something in his face."

That same evening there was a knock on his door. "Two gentlemen asking for you." They presented themselves as Hugo's seconds. The matter had taken a serious turn. As soon as he was alone again, Sainte-Beuve ran to his desk, collected and made a bundle of his manuscripts, and then, after having written his will, went out to turn over the package to Renduel.

"I may be killed by Hugo," he said.

"Come, come. Calm yourself," said Renduel. "How can there be a duel between you, between two poets?"

Our duellist, who was more fitted to wield the poisoned dagger than the sword, was comforted. Besides, Renduel was also a confidant of Adèle and would surely inform her. In truth, he did, and once again the unhappy woman threw herself between the two men. The duel did not take place.

Two years later, in the autumn of 1837, coming home unexpectedly to the Place Royale, Hugo found Sainte-Beuve there. A violent scene took place between the two men which Victor was to recall later, when the *Livre d'amour* was published by Sainte-Beuve. In a poem addressed "to S.-B." he reminded the critic of "the day when I threw you out of my house, vile scoundrel; and, gripping you by the shoulder, in the stairway, I told you never to come back. That day I saw all your treachery gleaming in your eyes; saw your fury in your fear, and understood what cowardice changed to hatred might do. . . . The sight of the spider warns us of the presence of the web."

That was over, well over. Eaten up with humiliation, be-

littled by the husband in the eyes of the woman he loved, and knowing on whose side Adèle had taken her stand, Sainte-Beuve hastened his departure for Lausanne, where he was to deliver his admirable series of university lectures on Port-Royal and the Jansenists. He left Paris "sombre, thrice sombre." Six months later, on the eighteenth of March 1838, he described the rupture to Guttinguer. Adèle was decisively lost to him: "As concerns the Place Royale, I experienced what a moment of conversation would suffice to explain to you: on the one hand, a coarse, secret machination smelling of its Cyclops; and on the other hand an inconceivable and truly stupid credulity which allowed me to take the measure of an intelligence no longer illumined by love."

Adèle, for no longer loving Sainte-Beuve, was "stupid." Yet she had the frailty to see him six weeks later. If only she had known the feelings she inspired in Sainte-Beuve on that day. "I probably learned the truth of La Rochefoucauld's maxim: 'We forgive as long as we love.' Meanwhile, I think I have done with love, at least in that quarter."

Three years later, in 1841, after wondering if he still loved Adèle, Sainte-Beuve answers his own question quite simply by an entry in his Diary: "No; I hate her."

It will soon be time to bring out the *Livre d'amour*, and sign it "Joseph Delorme."

Under the Mask of Ruy Blas

On the tenth of June 1837, Louis-Philippe reopened Versailles. Gleaming with lights, refurbished, regilded, overgilded, the great gallery was filled by the army of romanticism. Alfred de Musset was there, and Alexandre Dumas; Eugène Delacroix, Michelet, and even Sainte-Beuve. Not only Versailles, but the July Monarchy, which was at the apogee of its popularity, was being fêted. Metternich had refused the Duke d'Orléans an Austrian archduchess, but no one minded that. The centre of this great crowd was the young wife of

the heir to the crown, Helen of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, the future queen of France.

"What a figure!"

"How gracefully her long neck carries that round little head!"

"It is her Polish blood that gives her that charm. Let us be thankful that there is nothing German in her."

"Her grandfather, August of Saxe-Weimar, was a friend of Goethe and Schiller."

"Helen has inherited the literary taste of her ancestor. What a romantic nature she has!"

"Her dream was always of Paris, and here she is, already reigning over our hearts. Her favourite poet is Victor Hugo. It was she who insisted that he be invited to the banquet in the Gallery of Mirrors."

"That is true: the king has always sulked at the mention of Hugo's name, and Hugo at mention of the king's."

"My dear, he returned his card of invitation and tried to beg off. The Duke d'Orléans had to write him a personal note, begging him not to disappoint the princess, before he agreed to change his decision."

"I say! That man in the uniform of an officer of the national guard is Hugo."

"The Duke d'Orléans is presenting him to the princess."

"They are talking together. Let us go nearer and listen."

Under the benevolent gaze of Ferdinand d'Orléans, the Prince Charming of romanticism, the poet and the young princess stood talking.

"Monsieur Hugo, how happy I am to see you! There were two men I wanted so much to know: Monsieur Cousin and you. I have often spoken of your works with Monsieur de Goethe. I have read all your books. I know your poems by heart, and you may ask me to repeat them to you. But I love best the poem in the *Chants du crépuscule* which begins:

C'était une humble église au cintre surbaissé,
L'église où nous entrâmes . . .

And as Hugo bowed his head over the little hand extended to him with royal grace, the vivacious princess added in a low tone: "I have visited *your* Notre-Dame."

Victor Hugo moved away bedazzled. There was now much less disdain in his heart for the monarchy of Louis-Philippe.

Several days later, by way of thanking him for his copy of the *Voix intérieures* which had just appeared, the duke and the duchess sent him one of the romantic paintings which had been received with most success at the Salon of 1837—the coronation of the corpse of Iñez de Castro, by Saint-Evre. Delacroix, to whom a message had been brought by kindly Dumas, had refused to give up his Marino Faliero. But Marino Faliero was a reminder of a tragedy by Casimir Delavigne, whereas—and the princess knew this—Victor Hugo, while still a schoolboy, had begun to write an *Iñez de Castro.* Another example of the princess's graciousness was this. Madame Victor Hugo had undertaken a charity sale. The Duchess d'Orléans had one of the poet's volumes bound in sumptuous style, and copied into it two of Hugo's lines, thus joining her princely signature to his own. More and more touched, more and more won over, Hugo became one of the frequenters of the Pavillon Marsan, where the Duke d'Orléans resided. The young prince had drawn about him all that was illustrious in the romantic movement, but Hugo was conquered more by her who was one day to reign over France than by him.

His poetic reveries and political ambition were expressed in one of the masterpieces among his dramas, in *Ruy Blas*, which he wrote in a few weeks during 1838. After having been Hernani, the chieftain of the band that besieged and took the academic Bastille, Hugo was now incarnated in the

Earth worm in love with a star,

in the humble Castilian poet, at once madly in love with his queen and striving passionately for social justice.

Sainte-Beuve, whose crafty scheming Victor Hugo had uncovered and who now boasted publicly that he had enjoyed

the favours of Adèle; whom Victor Hugo had thrown out of his house; must have served as model for a number of Don Salluste's traits:

> But gently to destroy a woman, and dig
> Beneath her feet a pit. . . .

Ruy Blas, the man of genius, "whom an admiring queen had made prime minister and who, by popular reforms, had rejuvenated an old and corrupt monarchy," was Hugo himself; but every evidence points, despite the historical data furnished Hugo by the *Mémoires* of Madame d'Aulnoye, to Helen of Mecklenburg as Marie de Neubourg, the German princess.

The love of the true Ruy Blas was chaste and secret. Too many obstacles stood between him and the Duchess d'Orléans who, indeed, adored her husband. This deep affection was to rise superior to catastrophe, to revolution, and to exile. In 1855, when Hugo lived proscribed, he wrote a poem to the Duchess d'Orléans, his fellow exile, in which perhaps he revealed the mystery of *Ruy Blas:*

Stoically, in simplicity, she accepts the harsh boredom,
The isolation, the affront with which a sot has fated us. . . .
Ah! how she would have slept beneath my faithful watch!
A lion for all others, I should have been a dog for her.

"A dog for her": something to muse over.

An Introduction on the Place Royale

On this Sunday evening—as on all Sunday evenings—Victor Hugo remained at home on the Place Royale. Landaus, barouches, some bearing escutcheons, stood before what had once been the hôtel de Guéménée, where Marion de Lorme had perhaps lived with her poet. The square buzzed like a hive. Long-haired, fantastically garbed young men hastened towards Hugo's brilliantly lighted home. Victor Hugo was receiving.

Inside the heavy doors was a stone staircase with a balustrade of wrought iron. Two stories up the guests came into a

vast anteroom filled with old Spanish chests and lighted at one side by a window on the square. Beyond was the dining room, cluttered with Renaissance chests of drawers, rococo credences, and pottery bought in the rue de Lappe. There, glowing under the lights of the candelabra, hung a magnificent tapestry representing the *Roman de la rose*. There were two doors: one led into the drawing room; the other into the corridor on which lay the rooms of the Hugo children—the girls, Léopoldine and Adèle; and the boys, Charles and François-Victor. Adèle's room, too, was here, with a graceful portrait of Léopoldine by Châtillon, and another painting of this friend of the family depicting Léopoldine's first communion in the church of Fourqueux, near Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Beyond the poet's own bedroom was his study, where only Hugo's intimate friends were permitted: Gautier, Nerval, the Devérias, David d'Angers, Châtillon, Boulanger, Delphine Gay, and Lamartine, when he deigned to come. Like the bedrooms, the red damask study looked out on an inner courtyard. It opened on a secret staircase which was used occasionally by Juliette when she came to the house. A frenetic painting by Châtillon, *le Moine rouge*, covered the ceiling. The *Monk*, garbed in a flamboyant cape, sat gravely reading the Bible on a nude woman's flank. On the walls hung water colours by Nanteuil and Boulanger—the *Fantômes*, the *Dernier jour d'un condamné*, the *Truands*. The windows were of stained glass, and all about were old books, old furniture, lacquer, Chinese porcelain. On the desk was a copper compass bearing the date 1489 and the name *La Pinta:* it was the compass of Christopher Columbus.

In the red salon, surrounded by her beautiful children, Madame Victor Hugo was receiving with royal grace Balzac, Berlioz, the Johannots, Pétrus Borel, Jehan Du Seigneur, Alfred de Musset, Préault, Humboldt, Buloz, Banville, Houssaye, Meurice, Vacquerie, and a stream of distinguished, sumptuously attired pretty women. There were two mantlepieces over which hung antique mirrors and upon which stood candlesticks,

great vases, rococo clocks, draped with rich bands of tapestry. The embrasures of the three windows were so deep that it was easy to isolate oneself there for private conversation. The perfume of flowers and foliage came in through the open windows. As much of the reception seemed to take place on the square as in the drawing rooms. Young France went down to smoke in the paths of the Place Royale, about the statue of Louis-the-Chaste, and then came up again, drunken with the night, with the starry blue, into the dazzling light of the candles and the movement of the dances.

And what of the throne, of which the satirical weeklies wrote? The throne, the platform where the pope of the church of romanticism received the homage of his flock, giving his beautiful hand to kiss like an emperor, and blessing his worshippers as they knelt upon its steps? There were no steps; there was no throne, no platform. Facing the windows stood a great lambrequin-hung dais which was said to have belonged to Madame de Maintenon. "The dais of the Dey," Gautier called it, for he as well as Hugo was fond of punning. Only the initiate could appreciate this pun. The back of the dais was in fact made of a trophy captured at the Siege of Algiers, a standard borne by the Dey Hussein and given to Hugo by Lieut. d'Elbée. Beneath the dais of the Dey stood a broad divan covered with antique embroideries, where the young women preferred to sit, and where, it is not unlikely, a lingering friend was sometimes put to bed, once the lights were out. Such was the throne of Victor Hugo.

And yet, present or absent, he reigned over this vast room. Near Louis Boulanger's *Feu du ciel*, which hung as pendant to the same artist's portrait of the graceful and proud wife of the poet, and close to the imperishable bust by David d'Angers, hung a great portrait of Hugo with François-Victor between his knees, a canvas painted with a master's brush by the painter-poet, Auguste de Châtillon. Burning with a sombre flame, under the splendour of the immense brow, were the eyes reddened by wakeful nights, the drawn eyebrows, the bit-

ter sensual mouth revealing the defeats suffered by the man, the anguish of a threatened love, the falterings of the soul, the wanderings of the flesh and the mind. In this burning canvas we gaze upon the metamorphosis of the beautiful and tranquil archangel into a powerfully tormented faun. As for David's bust, it breathes only glory, the immortality of genius. Here is none of Lamartine's magnificent winging towards heaven; here is no romantic Apollo with a sublime forehead touching the stars: this is Olympio, this is a god, born of a long line of peasants, the god of the thickets, of the prairies, the plough; it is Olympio and it is Antæus, the robust giant whose strength is doubled by every contact with the earth and who, in the autumn of his life, in hailing it, hails his own genius:

It is the earth, it is the plain, it is the fields.

This evening a clamour suddenly filled the square. A young fanatic, Auguste Vacquerie, leaned towards the master: "Their royal Highnesses."

The guests made way. Quickly, Victor and Adèle hurried to the head of the staircase where a blond young man, dressed in a major general's uniform, was already coming up the stairs with a gracious and vivacious young woman on his arm: the Duke and the Duchess d'Orléans.

"Your Highness; Madame."

In the great drawing room Louise Bertin had assembled a group of girls who sang:

Come to the feast
Page, lady, and lord!
Come all to the feast,
Flowers in your hair
And joy in your hearts!

This chorus from *Esmeralda* welcomed their royal Highnesses. When the song was ended, "Who," asked Helen d'Orléans, the future queen of France, "who is that strange little girl who is so beautiful and sings with such proud grace?"

"The dark one; very pale?"

"No, the girl in white; so white, so tall, with that hair Titian would have loved."

Victor Hugo bowed: "Her mother, doña Manuela, was brought to us by Mérimée. The girl, Madame, is Spanish. Her name is Eugénie de Montijo. . . ."

The Eaglet

With the *Ode de la Colonne*, the poet of France divorced himself from the Bourbons. When he wrote the *Trois Glorieuses* he was still disinclined to Louis-Philippe. Born of the barricades, this reign had yet to experience uprisings before it became stable. The celebrated ode entitled *A la Jeune France* was written under the sign of Napoleon. In 1831, King Joseph, who had held General Hugo in high esteem, despatched to his son a secret envoy, Joel Roberts Poinsett. The business in hand was to work for the coming of Napoleon II to the throne.

On the sixth of September the author of *Cromwell* declared himself unequivocally an adherent of the Duke de Reichstadt, and a few weeks later he added to the *Feuilles d'automne*, then about to appear, his *Souvenir d'enfance*, a poem of Napoleonic inspiration. In this same month of September 1831, while the poet was dedicating this poem to Joseph Bonaparte, the ex-king of Spain, who had been living in the United States since 1815, received a call from Joel Roberts Poinsett, who brought good news. Republicans and Bonapartists had joined against the usurper; even as under the Bourbons, the secret societies were impressed by the Napoleonic prestige; and the revolutionists of *Cromwell*, the conqueror of *Hernani*, the young commander-in-chief of the army of romanticism, was celebrating the victory of the Eagle only in order to hasten the triumph of the Eaglet—of *l'Aiglon*. France was calling for Napoleon II. All that was needed was to spirit him away from Schoenbrunn and lead him from belfry to belfry until they reached Notre-

Dame. How was Joseph to resist the call of a whole nation? His head filled with dreams of glory, the old king made up his mind and sailed for London on the twelfth of July 1832. He set foot on British soil only to learn of the catastrophe. Two days after his departure from the United States his nephew died. The Eaglet had expired at Vienna on the twenty-second of July before ever he had spread his wings. The sorrow and disappointment of France were forever expressed by Victor Hugo in a sublime and illustrious ode. But when Joseph, now the sole pretender to the throne of Napoleon asked the poet to confer with him in London, Victor Hugo declined. Why should he adopt the cause of a prince without prestige? Already he saw the future of France as the Republic. And there was something else which he did not mention. "Why," he wrote in the preface to his *Marion de Lorme*, "should not a poet appear who would be to Shakespeare what Napoleon was to Charlemagne?"

After the emperor, the poet. After Austerlitz, *Hernani.* For Victor Hugo the true successor of Napoleon was not Joseph Bonaparte: it was Victor Hugo.

Mirabeau; Claude Gueux

"Thus mother, father, wife, the law, the King, that is to say, everything that naturally and legitimately surrounds and limits a man was a stumbling block to him, the occasion of a fall and a bruise. He encountered only two things in his life, both irregular and in revolt against the established order, which were kind to him: a mistress and a revolution."

Of whom, in 1834, could Victor Hugo speak thus if not of himself? The mother who bred in him hatred of his father; the father who taught him to despise his mother; the wife who drew away from him; the prejudiced law which lost him his suit over *le Roi s'amuse;* the king who persecuted him; the mistress—Juliette, doubtless—who calmed him; the revolution which alone would permit his genius to attain its full flower—

all these, you say, are Hugo. Do not deceive yourself: the subject here is Mirabeau, upon whom Lucas de Montigny had just published his great work, and whose panegyric the poet had undertaken.

The subject was Mirabeau. But in truth, as Sainte-Beuve insinuated, the poet "saw himself, mirrored and copied himself in this pocked and pitted face as in a thousand-faceted looking-glass." How many traits in common between the orator and the poet: the unleashed ambition, the vehement generosity, the sonorous love of the masses, the verbal and carnal sensuality. While the chief of the romantic school was studying Mirabeau he was thinking of the orator he would soon become. What tempted him in Mirabeau was the word become action, the word insuring the exercise of power. *Marie Tudor* had been a failure; with *Angelo*, it was a melodrama thrown off to pay Juliette's debts. These plays did not interest him. What was then of passionate interest to Victor Hugo was political or social pamphleteering: his *Mirabeau* and his Claude Gueux. Once again the guillotine had obsessed him. He was not content with having written the *Last Day of a Condemned Man*—a novel. Reality embraced him. The trial of Claude Gueux, a living murderer, who had really committed a crime and been executed on the public square in Troyes, gave him the occasion to protest a second time against the death penalty: "The head of a man of the people is full of useful germs. Cultivate this head; weed it; water it; fecundate it; clarify it; moralise it; use it—and you will never need to cut it off."

We Will Give You a Handsome Funeral

The winter fog was vanishing. A red bullet lay in the snow. It was the sun of the fifteenth of December, 1840, in the month of Austerlitz.

"Charity, good sir, in the name of great Napoleon!"

Despite the zero weather the great crowd was singing

> Napoleon loved war
> And his people as Jesus loved . . .

The vast open space before the *Invalides* was filled with tiered stands. Women wore overshoes, heavy veils, and furs which hid their faces and their forms. Men were dressed in wound scarves and fantastic mufflers. Victor Hugo greeted someone with a wave of the hand. Not far off a slim, olive-skinned man with Asiatic eyes seemed to be suffering more than any of the others from the cold. He was holding by the hand a curly-haired boy. They were Eugène Delacroix and his pupil Maurice Sand. Facing Hugo was a statue of Jeanne d'Arc. On the horizon glittered the sublime gilded dome.

Twelve thirty: a procession approached. It was the marshals and generals. The sun glanced from the breastplates of the cavalry. A roar of cannon: the Emperor's chariot was coming. All the flags of France, "a forest of flags," were followed by a white horse carrying the saddle in which Bonaparte had sat at Marengo. The crowd shivered. "That is Napoleon's battle-horse" someone invented, and it was believed. Behind the white horse came long sombre files, the five hundred sailors of the *Belle Poule;* and following them, the general staff with the Prince de Joinville at its head. And here was the immense chariot covered with violet crêpe sown with the imperial bees and framing fourteen victories. There was a long pause. The chariot stopped. Jeanne d'Arc and Victor Hugo stood watch over Napoleon.

At last the procession resumed its march towards the dome of glory. Wearing the epic *kolback*, the tiger-striped helmet, the *ourson* on which the imperial eagle was spread in flight, the survivors of the *Grande Armée* marched by. There was many an empty sleeve, many a glorious wooden leg. The crowd sobbed and the drums beat. Behind the iron gate of the

Invalides, the Prince de Joinville stood bowing before the king. One hundred cannon spoke as he spoke:

"Sire, I present to you the body of the Emperor Napoleon."

Louis-Philippe drew himself up and replied: "In the name of France, I accept it."

But it was not the *Citizen King* who in truth was accepting the body in the name of France: it was Victor Hugo. It was he who greeted the Return of the Emperor:

> Sire you will come again into your capital
> Without tocsin or battle or struggle or cry,
> Drawn by eight steeds under the triumphal arch
> In the habiliments of an Emperor.

At the Tuileries

After the mantle-shelf of the Pavillon Marsan, the mantle-shelf of the Tuileries. Victor Hugo had become one of the familiars of the royal palace. The sly old king listened to him as he elaborated his political schemes. When Victor Hugo happened to attack Monsieur Thiers a little warmly, the king, who had no more love for his minister than Victor had, seemed about to approve the diatribe by nodding his wig.

On this evening they talked rather later than usual, and while the Prince de Joinville was teasing the Duchess d'Aumale in a window-seat, Louis-Philippe somewhat surprisingly turned the conversation on the subject of love.

"I have been in love only once in my life," he declared.

"With whom, Sire?"

"With Madame de Genlis."

"That doesn't count. She was your governess."

The king began to laugh, and went on: "Exactly. And a hard governess, I swear. She brought up my sister and me with ferocious severity. We were up at six every morning, winter or summer. It was she who accustomed me to sleeping on the bare floor. She had me taught a variety of manual things, so that, thanks to her, I know something of all trades,

including the monk's. I can bleed my man as well as any barber. I am a carpenter, a groom, a mason, a smith. While I was growing up, I saw that she was very pretty. I didn't know what it was that happened to me whenever I was with her. I was in love, of course; but I was not aware of it. Madame de Genlis, however, knew about these things: she saw what was going on and maltreated me frightfully. She was then the mistress of Mirabeau, and she would say to me: 'But, Monsieur de Chartres, great booby that you are! Why do you go on putting your hands in my skirts?' She was then thirty-six, and I was seventeen."

Conquered City

On the third of June, 1841, a crowd struggled to get into the domed hall of the *Académie Française*. After three successive defeats, Victor Hugo had been elected a member on the seventh of January, by a vote of seventeen to fifteen. He was replacing Népomucène Lemercier. On the night of his election Juliette had sent him this bulletin of victory: "Thanks to your seventeen friends, and despite the peevish snouts of your fifteen enemies, you are now an Academician. *What happiness!!* You ought to bring me your ravishing, beautiful head to see and kiss for longer than the five minutes of this evening."

Juliette had dreamt of a gown of "white tarlatan in clouds and great folds and a rose scarf cutting across the white bodice," but she had to give up this sumptuous luxury and content herself with a simpler frock. Had she not spent 22 francs 16 sous for the sleeves and jabot of Victor's Academy uniform? And had there not been Claire's communion to burden her budget? It didn't matter, really: her radiant beauty eclipsed her neighbours in their more elegant dress.

The tarlatan gown which had haunted her dreams was worn by a girl of seventeen, Mars's pupil, Mademoiselle Doze. The fresh face of this child disappeared in a great white flounced Neapolitan cape, bordered with a double fold of tufted silk.

Near by sat the Countess Merlin all in pink, still dazzling despite her fifty-odd years and her memories of the court of King Joseph. Her contemporary, Madame Dupin, who edited the *Journal des femmes*, had elected to appear in the shade of brown known as *feuille morte*, so dear to Madame Cottin. In front of her sat Madame Thiers in a hood of flounced rose crêpe trimmed with *flowers of Peru*. The Muses were all in attendance. Not far from Mademoiselle Mars was the great *electress* of Victor Hugo to the Academy, Madame Emile de Girardin, in a straw hat trimmed with bouquets of geraniums, a striped organdie dress, and over her shoulders a scarf "from the land of Oscar and of Malvina." Another Muse, Anaïs Ségalas, the author of *Oiseaux de passage*, wore a hat of white crêpe on which two clusters of roses held a veil of English tulle. Already crowned by the Academy, Louise Colet, a blonde beauty, sat in triumph in the first row in a gown of corn-coloured silk and a chantilly scarf, her straw hat coloured by violet velvet.

The session was about to open. Monsieur de Balzac, who had refused to oppose Hugo, was having a hard time finding a seat. The soldiers sprang suddenly to attention and opened a path for the prince and the princesses who were arriving. This election was partly their election. The Duke d'Orléans crossed the room to the reserved boxes. The Duchess, her lively face shaded by a little white hat garnished with pale roses, held his arm. Behind them came the Duchess de Nemours and the Princess Clementine.

A stir announced the arrival of Hugo, and once again the house arose. He was very pale, and his eyes looked around for Juliette. She smiled at him, and he was reassured. His long auburn hair was smoothly combed. Parted with care over his pyramidal forehead it fell in rolls to the embroidered collar of his uniform. His deep-set black eyes shone with proud joy. A white collar, folded over a cravat of black satin, framed marvellously his face which was still young, but pale and grave. The cross of an officer of the Legion of Honour hung

on his green coat, which was well cut and closely fitted at the waist. He wore, and did not remove, white gloves. "His bearing was superb; it was that of a conqueror entering a conquered city."

All the ladies in the audience applauded, but they were soon to be disappointed. The literary feast to which the beautiful Muses looked forward was not vouchsafed them. Victor Hugo spoke only of politics. He as much as announced his candidacy to the House of Peers. He demonstrated the preponderance of genius in matters of law, thought, and action, and offered to collaborate with the reigning dynasty: "To civilise men by the calm radiance of thought over their heads: that, Gentlemen, is the mission, the function, and the glory of the poet." He pronounced a splendid eulogy of Napoleon, glorified with some reserve the Convention, but delivered an *apologia* for Malesherbes. As traditionalist, the poet praised "the three most radiant things, after God, of this world: royalty, beauty, and genius." When he uttered the word *beauty* his eyes lingered on Juliette, who trembled at such homage. The next day, transported with enthusiasm, she wrote to Olympio: "From the moment of your entry into the hall of the Academy I felt a delighted astonishment which lay midway between intoxication and ecstasy. . . . Victor, my Victor, I love you! I want to kiss your feet, to carry you in my arms."

The Genius of the Rhine

"The Rhine is more French than the Germans think. . . . The left bank of the Rhine has remained French, while the right bank, naturally and necessarily German, has become Prussianised. Wander along the bank, go into the inns, the taverns, the shops; everywhere you will see pictures of Frederick the Great and the battle of Rosbach on the walls. Go down the left bank, visit similar places, and you will see the

mute protest of Napoleon and Austerlitz. The liberty of the wall still exists, and it suffices, as we see, to render public these secret thoughts."

Stemming from the marches of the East, the son of that true Lorrainer, General Hugo, who defended and saved Thionville, grandson of a master carpenter of Nancy and through him born of the soil of Baudricourt which owned the signal glory of bringing forth Joan the Maid, Claude Gellée, and the greatest of our poets, Victor Hugo turned naturally towards the Rhine. He studied it, observed it, and finally, as early as 1842, was led to conclude that "infallibly one day, perhaps soon, the Rhine would be the question which would inflame the continent."

His first journey there, made with Juliette in 1839, had "no other object than to see the trees and the sky. . . . The sight of the great river produced in him, nevertheless, that which no other incident of his journey had hitherto done: a determination to see and observe for a particular purpose which fixed the direction of his thoughts, imprinted an almost precise significance upon his originally haphazard excursion, lent a focal point to his studies, and, in brief, transported him from the domain of dreams into that of thought."

Eighteen hundred forty, 1862, 1863, 1864, 1865, 1869: each of these years, each of these stages, was to see the great poet, grown more and more disturbed for the future, retrace his steps to the Rhine. At the end of the Terrible Year of 1871 he sojourned a while in the free duchy of Luxembourg where he was received with the most respectful hospitality, and journeyed to Thionville, a town riddled with Prussian bullets, to which in the name of his father he formally promised "life, liberty, and the homeland in the near future."

The militarised and Prussianised right bank of the Rhine was never again to see the great traveller. But the Lorelei to whose songs he hearkened perhaps overlong, could not forget the beauties which it had inspired in Hugo. He, whose culture

had been so profoundly Latin, impregnated with Horace and Virgil, wrote *le Rhin, les Burgraves,* and the great epics of the *Légende des siècles, les Cavaliers errants. Welf, Castellan d'Osbor,* resists the emperor in his tower even as the exiled Hugo was to resist Louis Napoleon on his wind-battered island; his *Eviradnus* personifies the knightly old poet in the twilight of life, who was to loom as the burgrave of democracy.

The Undine of the Rhine and the moonlit visions seen from the crumbling castles revealed the astonishing plastic art which Hugo bore within him. Before seeing the Rhine, Hugo's drawing stammered its concern with the technique of Nanteuil and Boulanger. Lorelei illuminated him by her magic, and his first pictures of the Rhine voyage are masterpieces. The most of his visionary and beautiful compositions are lighted by the silvery beams of the moon, and the poet of *les Rayons et les Ombres* himself explains why this is so in his *Rhin,* whose languid grace and magnificence recall Chateaubriand: "The moon among ruins is more than light; it is harmony. It hides no detail and exaggerates no wound. It throws a veil over things broken and adds I know not what misty nimbus to the majesty of old edifices. It is better to see a crumbling palace or cloister by moonlight than in the day. The hard brightness of the sun fatigues the ruins and importunes the sadness of the statues."

Prose writer, poet, draughtsman, politician, Hugo was at once Lorrainer and Latin, classic and Gothic, the true Genius of the Rhine, destined ever to rise on the bank of the river as the personification of generous and clairvoyant France. This eminently conciliatory mission he defined for the future in one of those eternal formulæ in which are resumed all the tendencies of his work—and all the destinies of our fatherland: "France is the point of intersection of all that has been and will be, the common bond between old royalties and young nations, between the people who remember and those who hope. The streams of the centuries may flow; the passage

of humanity is assured. France is the gigantic bridge which will carry the generations from one bank to the other."

WHY THE *Burgraves* HAVE NONE

Tragedy was reviving. Rachel was leading the public back to Corneille and Racine. Dorval and Bocage had deserted to the enemy. Romantic drama had been wounded in full flight; and at the *Comédie Française* Hugo's *Burgraves*, an epic play inspired by the Genius of the Rhine, dominated by the huge shadow of Napoleon in the tattered but imperial guise of Barbarossa, was about to be performed. Where are now the evenings of *Hernani?* In *Hernani* everything was young: the characters, the author, the public. But now! . . . Filled with anxiety, sensing the wind of defeat upon their faces, Paul Meurice and Auguste Vacquerie, two of the commanding general's aides-de-camp, went for re-enforcements to Célestin Nanteuil, one of the veterans of *Hernani:*

"Nanteuil, find us three hundred Spartans ready to conquer or die rather than allow the army of the barbarians to pass through Thermopylæ."

He who had been "the young man of the middle ages" shook his head, with its long, curly, frizzled hair, and said finally in a melancholy tone: "Young man, go tell your master that youth has disappeared. I can no longer provide you with three hundred young men."

On the seventh of March, 1843, when the curtain rose for the first time upon the *Burgraves*, the house was already tingling with unrest. It may easily be imagined that Rachel went to no trouble to play the rôle of Guanhumara, whose wrinkles, indeed, she abhorred. Madame Mélingue was commonplace in her part. The immense beards worn by Beauvallet, who played Job, and by Ligier in the rôle of Barbarossa, made the house smile. The stature of the characters was crushing. Thérmamène's monologue in *Phèdre*, which the romantics had so greatly ridiculed, was much less wearisome, much more

suited to its play, than these interminable epic narrations. Seated between Frédérick Lemaître and Gautier, the sculptor Préault, he who during the battle of *Hernani*, had cried out to the baldheaded *bourgeois:* "To the guillotine! On your knees!" leaned over to Gautier and whispered: "It's dull."

"It is worse," answered Gautier; "it's a deadly bore."

"Foul!" declared Jules Janin, who was nevertheless to write the *apologia* of the trilogy in the *Débats.*

And in the foyer Janin repeated to Sainte-Beuve, who was rubbing his hands: "If I were Home Secretary I'd award the cross of the Legion of Honour to the first man who hissed."

Lamartine confessed his disappointment, but as poet he rendered homage to the poet: "I think these are the most beautiful verses Hugo has ever written. They are grandiose and picturesque; but they are not true."

To be sure, it was not true, it was not natural, it was not dramatic: it was epical. The *Burgraves* sound the prelude to the *Légende des siècles.* What matter if the play was hissed. When Ligier spat into the faces of the hissers Barbarossa's challenge:

> If you but had hearts, if you but had souls,
> You should quickly be told that you were but ghouls

he was acclaimed. When, at the close of his proud anathema hurled against the *Burgraves,* old Barbarossa cried

> . . . the emperor crushes your towers with his heel,
> And the eagle comes down upon the vultures that wheel

a short, thickset, high-coloured man in a bluebottle coat and black silk waistcoat, his face round and vulgar, his flaming golden eyes shining with genius, stood up in a balcony stall and applauded with all his strength. It was Balzac who thus loosed the flood of enthusiasm. But the last act, with its recitals of what had gone before, its frayed threads of melodramatic structure, was a prodigious bore. The curtain fell upon an immense yawn.

Through thirty performances Beauvallet, Ligier, and Madame Mélingue struggled bravely against the hisses and catcalls, and against what is worse—chill indifference. Meanwhile, on the twenty-second of April, Ponsard's *Lucrèce*, which had had such success in the drawing rooms whence the "school of common sense" was emerging, and had been sponsored by Lamartine, was played by Dorval and Bocage in triumph at the *Odéon*. This triumph swept away the *Burgraves* and drove Hugo forever from concern with the theatre. As it was the year 1843, and all the town was talking of comets, Laurent Jan published a lithograph showing Hugo beside the deserted booking office of the *Comédie Française*, scanning the skies, with, below, this legend:

> Hugo, scanning the blue vaults,
> Is asking the Lord in a moan,
> Why, if stars may have queues,
> The *Burgraves* should have none.

She Loved God, the Flowers

On the highway between Auch and Agen a mailcoach was rolling swiftly through the night, bearing two sleeping travellers. "Monsieur and Madame Georget" they had called themselves when engaging their seats at the post office. The shining moon showed the woman to be still young though mature of form. Her head lay on the broad shoulder of a robust man with an immense forehead. Suddenly a jerk of the coach awoke the sleeping man, and his eyes opened. To the right was a precipice, the edge of the road barely visible. A mist was floating on the horizon, and mingled with it were a few torn brown clouds. The moon was setting and the day dawning in a strange glow of sky marbled with black clouds and white fog. He seemed to be looking at an immense mountain whose ridge was lost in infinity. The stars were like shepherds' fires lighted here and there along a gigantic slope. Monsieur

Georget rubbed his eyes. In the three weeks during which he had been travelling through Spain and the Pyrenees, nothing had amazed him so much as this supernatural vision. The optical illusion vanished, but the spectacle was still one of beauty. Those constellations which we see when they are high overhead Monsieur Georget now saw declining on the horizon. The Great Bear, already half wrapped in the mist, had become immense. Its seven stars shone like seven small moons; and this enormous chariot toppling above the earth lent to the whole sky an extraordinary and terrible configuration.

This was the effect of the fog. Reaching Agen on the fourth of September, Monsieur Georget seemed to see the ocean before him: it was the swollen Garonne. Three days later, after having visited Périgueux and Saintes, the travellers reached the island of Oléron. Something sinister was in the air. Monsieur Georget scribbled in his notebook: "My soul was as dark as death. . . . It seemed to me that this island was a great coffin lying in the sea." With what relief they left the sombre island and landed again at Rochefort! On the ninth, a chance stroll on the sunny moor led them to the village of Soubise. Thirsty, they went into a café and asked for beer and the newspapers. With the beer they were given a copy of the *Siècle*. The man opened the paper, tried to stand up, wavered, and fell back into his seat. His face, which had first grown purple, was now icy pale. Madame Georget took the paper from his hands. She cried out, and then stifled a sob.

On the fourth of September, the very day of the terrible dawn over Agen, Léopoldine Hugo had died by drowning in an estuary of the Seine, at Villequier, with Charles Vacquerie, her young husband.

They hurried back to Rochefort, delirious with an anguish which felt neither thirst nor fatigue, an anguish that moaned and wailed. The masks fell: Monsieur and Madame Georget

vanished, their places taken by Victor Hugo and Juliette Drouet, his mistress who remembered that she too was a mother and who shared humbly the suffering of a father.

At Rochefort they learned that all the carriages had been engaged. But Victor had to go on to La Rochelle, and he took the single seat vacant on the top of the mailcoach, bidding farewell to Juliette. At La Rochelle, which he reached towards ten in the evening, he found it was impossible to go on until the next evening. Meanwhile, no shelter, not a room. Eventually a garret and a pallet of straw were found. All the next day spent waiting, while his blood burned and he yearned to see the dead girl before they buried her. . . . Saumur, Tours, league after league of highway while memories floated into his mind. Léopoldine twittering like a bird in her swan-neck cradle whose curtains were sown with stars. Didine at dawn slipping into the wide bed where both her parents still lay sleeping. Her little hands trying to raise mamma's eyelids to make her understand that it was time to wake up. Adèle resisting, then giving way—and the gaiety and laughter of the three.

The journey to Switzerland with Nodier. Didine's cradle in the coach. Her delighted good humour. Later, as soon as she was able to take long walks, their strolls in the fields, she still so young, so filled with illusions and love, so happy to see her pick armfuls of poppies and bluebells. Léopoldine, the crown princess with the young hare's eyes, her smile like her father's, her gold-brown curls, roses in her cheeks and in her hands, pampered, adulated, fêted at mother Saguet's by the cohort of Young France, and they shouting in chorus: "What a beauty is our little Hugo!" Léopoldine painted by Boulanger and by Châtillon. . . . Rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs where a blind woman taught her to read. Léopoldine at Bièvres, when "she was ten years old and I thirty; and I was the universe to her."

Fourqueux: Léopoldine's first communion in the rustic

church, the scene painted by Auguste Châtillon for all time. Léopoldine all alone in the choir, kneeling in her cloud of white muslin. . . . Seven years later her marriage to Charles Vacquerie in the Chapel of the Catechism in the church of Saint-Paul. The bride aureoled, as the communicant had been, by chastity, being united to the young man she loved as she had then been united to God. The great sadness of Victor and Adèle that day which brought to mind their dearest memories of Léopoldine's birth: little Didine whom they had rocked, cared for, watched over, and idolised in common. What a tie broke between those two on that day in February, 1843!

And what was that separation compared to this absence? The *Siècle* article so often re-read obsessed the pitiful father. Seven months after her marriage Léopoldine and her young husband had drowned. Fame, fame! In the dying light Victor Hugo laughed like a madman. He thought of his brother Eugène, dead six years before in a cell at Charenton. Madness was hovering over him, too—madness or suicide.

"I was like a madman that first instant." Suicide. Juliette was beside herself with fear since she had seen that cold resolution in his eye; and as soon as she got back to Paris, frightened by the desolate father's silence, she wrote him on the thirteenth of September (he himself had got back only the evening before): "My Victor, before abandoning yourself to your despair, think of mine, since I love you more than life."

Victor Hugo's mourning was the mourning of all France. Even the royal family participated in it, and most of all the Duchess d'Orléans who had for a year past been mourning the tragic death of the duke. Madame Hugo, stricken forever to the heart, distracted by sorrow, was scarcely able to read all the letters of condoling sympathy which poured in upon her. One of them went as follows:

"Someone who was present told me what happened that evening at the Château d'Eu. Since at least a score of people will tell you the story you will be able to judge the truth of



VICTOR HUGO ABOUT 1880

mine. They were all seated about in the family drawing room. The queen, who was reading a newspaper, cried out suddenly, 'Ah! what terrible news!' Everybody rushed forward, and she read the paragraph aloud with repressed emotion. Immediately afterward the poor Duchess d'Orléans left the table and retired. Her lady of honour, Madame de Montesquiou, followed her and came back, after a quarter of an hour, to present the princess's excuses to the queen. She was too unwell to reappear. . . ."

Villequier, with its little cemetery where Léopoldine slept in the same coffin with Charles Vacquerie was, to the end of their lives, the most sacred place of pilgrimage of Victor and Adèle. On the fourth of November, 1843, Madame Hugo wrote to Victor Pavie, who had lost a little girl, these beautiful and anguished Christian words:

"*Raise aloft your eyes and lower them as seldom as possible.* Only such words as these have made life endurable for me. At the grave of my children, from which I have just returned, I touched only their bodies with mine. *My soul went out of me in order to unite itself with theirs.* There is bliss in the union, the communion, of souls. Seek it and you will find it as I did. Tell yourself that every day, no matter though you live as long as man has ever lived, you are near those dear little ones, and you will bless every day that dawns. And as you say, God knows better than we know what must be done. . . ." Day for day, one year after the passing of Léopoldine, the father's voice echoed that of the mother in the most sublime words ever dictated to man by resignation to sorrow:

Je viens à vous, Seigneur, père auquel il faut croire,
Je vous porte, apaisé,
Les morceaux de ce cœur tout plein de votre gloire
Que vous avez brisé.

"I come to You, O Lord, Father in whom we must believe. Calmed, I bring You the fragments of a heart filled with Your glory, which You broke."

To resign oneself was well enough; but how was one to forget?

Livre d'amour!

In the glorious life of Victor Hugo, in this existence which to the public—and to those who envied as well as those who admired—appeared so Apollonian, so Olympian, the year 1843 was decidedly the year of rebuff, defeat, disaster, and betrayal. Before the poet could rise up under these blows ten years would have to pass; a revolution, a *coup d'Etat*, barricades, exile, and the mighty song of the sea would have to come to his aid. For nearly ten years he was silent.

The *Burgraves* had failed; the romantic drama was shipwrecked; Léopoldine had died at Villequier. "The house on the Place Royale is sad and silent. But at night is heard the cry of pain of the mother who sits fondling constantly a lock of her drowned daughter's hair. During the day, Hugo holds his children in an embrace upon his knees."

But everything vanishes in the presence of a coffin. Hearing of the tragedy at Villequier, Alfred de Vigny, who had ceased to see Hugo, not only sent his profound sympathy, but wrote warmly of their old friendship, and the two great poets were brought together again. "This is the time for you to go in again through the *wide wound*," wrote Victor Pavie to Sainte-Beuve. But even before such anguish the hatred of "Joseph Delorme" was not to be defeated. "No, I did not go in again through the *wide wound*, as you put it so eloquently. I ought not to have done it; I did not think I should do it. . . . Before I return to the Place Royale, even after this great sorrow, the formal desire for my return must be made clear to me. Then it would be a command. The desire was not expressed, and I am out for eternity."

Sainte-Beuve exaggerated. When, in the following year, he needed Victor Hugo's vote to help him into the Academy, he learned how to divest himself of all scruple and go knock-

ing on the door of the Place Royale. For the moment, he was filled with evil intent. In order to seduce—in vain, as it turned out—Madame d'Arbouville, a very pure and very charming woman of the best society, but whom the pretended conquest of Madame Hugo might appear to influence, Sainte-Beuve was preparing to publish an edition of two hundred copies (which is scarcely clandestine) of his *Livre d'amour*. He was engaged in correcting the proofs of this volume, which contained many poems addressed to and known to Adèle, but to which he had added the coarse incense burned in honour of street women, of those vulgar and ephemeral encounters which had permitted Amaury (in his novel) to lay tranquilly at the feet of Madame de Couaën his purified affection. In the same way, Musset's *Nuits* were not the product of a single inspiration.

For this reason Adèle, who knew the truth, was to forgive Sainte-Beuve the *Livre d'amour*, the pendant in verse to his novel, *Volupté*. The hero of the verses was the same as the hero of the novel, the same double dealer making plain that debauch helped him to free the higher elements of his soul. Adèle Hugo was aware that these lines, though written in passion, were addressed to her:

> And thus without blasphemy She and I
> Can touch these objects of prayer and of faith. . . .

But she knew as well that it was not she who had inspired the sonnet entitled *Aux Champs-Elysées* which opens,

> Lower no shade for fear of being known.

Besides, she who knew from experience how intense was the imaginative life of poets, had encouraged him to full expression—on paper. How many true women, that is, subtle, prudent, and yet flattered to light such high flames, avert danger by exhorting the too-pressing lover to confide his amorous impulses to a notebook, to indite there the perturbations of his enslaved being! This supreme coquetry came naturally to

a great lady of romanticism who felt distate for carnal love and gave only her heart. Who knows if Adèle did not one day say, laughing, to Sainte-Beuve: "Your friendship I prize. I do not wish to lose it. Nevertheless, you will never have anything of me other than my tenderness. However, if you chose to imagine other things and to write them for yourself alone, you are free to do so." Let the reader not be shocked: she may well have said this. In *Volupté* Madame de Couaën, who is Adèle Hugo, seeing Amaury (Sainte-Beuve) burning with love, declares one evening that she has found a way to cure him. But as she is about to reveal the new remedy, she is covered with confusion, and refuses to speak:

"This reticence," Amaury relates, "finally aroused my curiosity; but it was only after we had gone twice around the garden that, led on by my questions and by her secret urge to speak, she began, after great embarrassment and much pleading that I do not ridicule her. 'I don't understand anything about these matters,' she stammered; 'but since desires, you tell me, increase until they have been satisfied, and then decrease and disappear (as you yourself have agreed), why not suppose in advance that they have already been satisfied, and begin with the sweet and simple sentiment which must survive them.' Before finishing these words, she had blushed a thousand colours."

It is only a woman who could have invented this subterfuge. The most intelligent man in the world, Sainte-Beuve himself, could not have thought of it.

Yet, written though it was with the consent of Madame Hugo, the *Livre d'amour* was never meant to see the light of day. It was first published clandestinely, but at what a moment! At a time when the woman he loved was mourning the death of her daughter, he delivered this desolate mother up to the curiosity and the tongue-wagging of a malevolent public.

Victor Hugo knew nothing of this. Thanks to his intercession, Vigny had withdrawn his candidacy to the Academy and Sainte-Beuve had obtained a seat. In February, 1845, the

friend he betrayed received him among the Immortals in a generous address: "As novelist you have plumbed unknown depths of human possibility, and in your new and patient analyses we feel continuously the secret strength which is hidden in the grace of your talent. . . ." Such was the unforeseen epilogue to *Volupté:* Monsieur de Couaën pronouncing a eulogy upon Amaury under the dome of the Academy.

Two months later the scandal broke. Only a few days after Hugo's entry into the House of Peers, Alphonse Karr published in the *Guêpes* an article entitled *An Infamy:*

"Grimalkin has made a singular discovery, nothing less than a great infamy plotted in secret by a beatifically innocent and saintly poet. The said poet is very ugly. He dreamt once that he was the lover of a beautiful and charming woman. For those who know the two people concerned, the thing would remain incredible and impossible even if it were true.

" . . . Not only has he been careful to relate in his verse all the habits and circumstances of the family, which permit of not the slightest doubt about the person indicated, but he has even named her in several places. This infamy, published to the number of one hundred copies, was to be sealed and deposited with a notary for distribution to certain designated persons after the death of the author. This book of hatred is called by its author *Livre d'amour.* . . . The reader will find in it the dates of their meetings, mention of the house in which they met, the quarter and the street in which the house is situated. One can go directly to it. Nothing is missing from this file. . . ."

What was the motive which impelled Karr to throw this bomb? His friendship for Hugo? Nay: reading the article, the great poet was not to be deceived. Craftily, cruelly, Karr —as the future has proved—was avenging himself much more upon Hugo than upon Sainte-Beuve. Had he not been Juliette Drouet's lover when the author of *Hernani* took her from him? Had not this ugly creature lived upon his mistress, profiting by her *liaison* with Prince Demidoff? Had he not afterward

refused to take the newspaper post which Hugo had found for him at Marseilles? And had not, later on, violent letters been exchanged between Juliette and *Monsieur Alphonse?* What beautiful revenge! to reveal Madame Hugo's dishonour under cover of defending her against Sainte-Beuve. Karr, the wasp, was revealing himself: what he had in mind was the stink of a great scandal.

This, of course, the new peer of France owed it to himself to prevent at any cost. A common danger drew Madame Hugo and Sainte-Beuve together. Sainte-Beuve sought to explain, to justify, to persuade: "The more two threatened people seem to stand together," he wrote her, "the less pretext they furnish to the enemies of one who are or pretend to be the friends of the other, to act against the one while affecting to serve the other. The less you appear astonished or irritated, the less pretext they will have to emphasise an irritation which will strike us both. . . ."

Madame Hugo allowed herself to be convinced. Sainte-Beuve promised to destroy all the copies of the *Livre d'amour*—a promise he held over her head by way of blackmail. As for Victor Hugo, he was forced to repress his fury against Sainte-Beuve. An even graver scandal was about to break over his head.

The *Fête chez Thérèse*

In the twilight gardens the *fête galante* was coming to an end. Crepuscular shadows were invading the trellissed, vine-hung theatre. Pierrot, who a little before, had been

> . . . haranguing, in grave conversation
> A monkey and drum astride on a dog,

came down from the boards to be complimented and embraced.

"Charming, your statuary, my dear Biard!"

"What a marvellous garden!"

"And what taste! In the curtain, and in Harlequin's cape,

your brush brought to life the whole Improvised Comedy of Italy."

"And your Pulcinella blowing into her trumpet!"

"And Columbine asleep in that great shell!"

"It was Léonie who posed for that."

"Madame Biard! That very blonde beautiful duchess!"

"And Carlino! And Crispino! And Pantaleone!"

"Samois will long remember all this."

"And so will Fontainebleau."

"And Paris too."

Down by the lilacs in bloom, beside the fountain with its dreaming swan, a rosy, golden, twenty-year-old listener was gazing with enchantment at a man with long wavy hair, wrapped in a black cape, who bent over her. She was Léonie d'Aunet—Madame Biard—"The Duchess Thérèse"; he was Victor Hugo. They were speaking in low voices, unwatched by the jealous husband. Lost in the bushes, a melancholy violin was evoking Watteau and Mozart. It is all to be read in Hugo's *Fête chez Thérèse.*

The Adventure of a Peer of France

Since the tragic death of the Duke d'Orléans, Victor Hugo's respectful friendship for his widow had continued to grow. He saw her often at the Tuileries, and thought she should be made Regent. He was ambitious to be her minister and the protector of the fatherless prince, the mutinous, silent Count de Paris. But before that he had to become a peer. On the thirteenth of April, 1845, despite the opposition of two dukes, Pasquier and Decaze, Victor Hugo was named peer of France. The conclusion of the *Génie du Rhin,* in which he pleaded for the reconciliation of the peoples of the two Rhenish banks, the address upon his reception into the Academy, and the favour of Princess Helen, had finally borne fruit. The author of *Cromwell* and of *Ruy Blas,* the zealous servant of the liberal empire, was now able to display his fitness for politics.

Three months later, on the fifth of July, 1845, in the passage Saint-Roch, the door of a bachelor's flat was broken down as in a novel by Paul de Kock. It was a case of a woman taken in adultery. The husband was very ugly, despite his flying toupee with its pigeon-wing flaps curled on the iron. "His horns rose up on his head," Madame Hamelin was to say.

There stood the police sergeant in his scarf. Behind the drawn curtains of the bed a young woman with golden hair was weeping and repairing the disorder of her toilet: Léonie d'Aunet, Biard's wife. In the middle of the room stood the lover, very pale, disdaining Sganarello's rage but listening attentively to the police officer who, after reminding him that adultery was punishable by a prison term, invited him to come along. The officer stopped speaking. As he took a step towards the silent lover, the latter raised his head and said firmly: "Do not touch me. I am the Viscount Hugo, a peer of France, and therefore inviolable. I am accountable only to the High Assembly of which I am a member."

Sganarello, at this, sent forth a flood of insult. The officer hesitated, stammered, and bowed. One gesture. The outraged husband and the guilty wife were taken out, she to the Saint-Lazare prison.

The scandal was at its height. One paper, the *National*, spared its readers no details of the unfortunate adventure of the illustrious personage who wore, in addition to the laurels of Parnassus, the ermine cloak of the peerage. Lamartine wrote hypocritically to his friend Dargaus: "The amorous adventure of my poor friend Hugo distresses me. . . . What must be sad for him is to know the poor woman in prison and himself at liberty." But after all, "France is elastic. One can regain one's feet even from a couch."

There was excitement at the Luxembourg, where the peers met. Furious at the blot upon the prestige of the Upper House, Pasquier prayed the king to demand Hugo's resignation as peer of France; but Louis-Philippe was too intelligent

not to wish to repair the damage otherwise. In return for a portrait commanded of Biard, whose high price was paid out of the king's private funds, the husband withdrew his complaint. Hugo was ordered to Spain. His passport was handed him, but he hid in the rue Saint-Anastase at Juliette's, for she knew nothing of this and was long to remain in ignorance.

And then Sainte-Beuve appeared on the horizon. He had learned, nobody knows how, that Olympio had not left Paris. "He is at work on something or other, somewhere, with which he hopes to cover the trace of what happened." And a little later, with a smug face, the hypocrite wrote to his friends, the Oliviers: "Nothing else is talked about. You do not mention it. Imagine, dear madame, with all you know, my sorrow and my worry over this."

Meanwhile, "the Duchess Thérèse" was suffering in the horrible promiscuity of the Saint-Lazare prison. One day a visitor was announced—Madame Victor Hugo. This true heroine of a Hugo drama, this great-hearted spouse, had come to dry the tears of the new Magdalene. The next day Madame Biard was called into the warden's office.

"From to-day on you will be detained in private. Someone has intervened in your favour."

"The viscount?"

"No. The Viscountess Hugo."

After the passage of years, on the fourteenth of August, 1845, legal separation between the Biards was pronounced. Léonie d'Aunet had but one thought which was to supplant Juliette, who still knew nothing of this affair. In the year 1846, she began to be received in the house on the Place Royale.

Juliette abhorred the peerage and the Academy which had taken from her the man she adored. By contrast, "the Duchess Thérèse" and Madame Hamelin, her old Bonapartist friend, thought only of politics. Through them it was that Victor, on the fourteenth of June, 1847, defended, in the Upper House,

king Jérôme's petition for the abrogation of the law by which the Bonapartes were banished from France.

Four years later Juliette received a packet of letters sealed with the arms of Victor Hugo. She opened it, read, wept, sobbed, and went out of her mind. Since May, 1844, Victor had had a young mistress, a woman of fashion received by Madame Hugo, and in sending her this packet "the Duchess Thérèse" was summoning Juliette to give up her place and to withdraw from the poet's life. The unhappy woman rushed out of her house, fled, ran, wandered, her heart torn, her mind gone, "weeping out her heart and her tears upon the pavement."

The next evening a key sounded in the lock.

"Victor!"

She showed him the letters addressed to Madame Biard. Far from withering her, despair rejuvenated her, made her more beautiful:

"Choose! Choose, and do not fear for my suffering if my suffering can make you happy. My turn to be happy will come, and it will last through eternity. I shall no longer fear rivalry, even among the most beautiful souls, even with the greatest love."

He lowered his head and asked for a respite, which was granted. But in his heart he had already chosen. He compared the attitude of the cruel young mistress with the generosity of the old one; and he gave back his affection to Juliette. The autumn of 1851 saw them more in love than ever, strolling in their new happiness through the forests of Fontainebleau. In the evening, on returning to the inn, Juliette wrote to Olympio:

"Your love penetrates me. It pierces to my soul like the rays of the sun reaching the earth through all the fogs and all the melancholy of autumn. My happiness is soaked in the tears which precede and follow love and the sun in this season of life and nature. My heart is strewn with all the dead leaves of

my illusions; but I feel within a sap which rises and awaits only thy vivifying breath to become flowers and fruit."

Down at the end of the twilit gardens the smile of "the Duchess Thérèse"—that pale pastel—was vanishing.

Prime Minister?

In the House of Peers Hugo sat at the Left with Montalembert, Wagram, Eckmuehl, and Alton-Shee.

"Young man, you are late," said the neighbour on his right, old Marshal Soult, a wreck of the Imperial glory. On his left sat Pontécoulant, one of those who had sentenced Louis XVI. Opposite him was Chancellor Pasquet who, twenty-five years before Hugo was born, had defended Beaumarchais in the Goëzman affair. The old monarchy, the Revolution, and the epical Empire environed and exalted him. The day before he had written in young Michel Ney's album verses as sublime as those of Corneille, verses which every son of France should have by heart, which begin:

Enfants, fils des heros disparus. . . .

"Children, sons of vanished heroes, sons of men who made my country greater than the two Romes. . . . You are covered by French glory. . . ."

The Upper House was to know moments of shame more serious than that in which a peer of France is surprised by a Sganarello in the arms of his wife: General Cubières, a former Minister of War, suborning Teste, President of the High Court and himself a former minister; the Duke de Choiseul-Praslin, like Teste and Cubières a peer of France, murdering his wife, the daughter of Marshal Sebastiani, and escaping the guillotine only with the aid of arsenic; Prince d'Eckmuehl, killing one of his mistresses with a hammer.

From below arose the mutter of anger and the titter of ridicule. The Duchess d'Orléans wrote sadly: "The evil goes deep, for it affects the morals of the people." "Why not,"

she wondered, "in view of the degradation of the upper classes, call upon the aristocracy of the intelligence?" Her hope was once more centred upon Victor Hugo who, since Lamartine had attacked the throne, and since a great poet was needed to oppose him, had become an intimate of the Tuileries. There was a night on which he was closeted with Louis-Philippe until a late hour, after which the king accompanied him, taper in hand, to the staircase.

Would Victor Hugo be made prime minister? It was possible, since already it was the subject of pleasantry. The *Mode* announced the news after its fashion:

"It is said that the Pavillon Marsan is preparing a more serious attack. It is actively recruiting all the young hearts which beat in grown men's breasts as well as all the goat-beards and flowing manes which decorate the lions of poetry and the *feuilleton.* At the head of this phalanx marches the very high and very puissant lord Hugo. We are assured that the Princess Helen, seeing herself about to set upon her head the crown of France, has formed the following Council of Ministers:

"Minister for War and President of the Council: Victor Hugo.

"Minister for Foreign Affairs: Théophile Gautier.

"Minister for Finance: Alfred de Musset.

"First Lord of the Admiralty: Alphonse de Lamartine.

"Minister for Home Affairs: Léon Faucher."

Two Poets in Torment

The revolution of contempt swept away the July monarchy —and with it the peerage. On the twenty-fourth of February, 1848, a man appeared on the balcony of the *mairie* of the quarter, on the Place Royale, surrounded by Ernest Moreau, the mayor, two students from the *Ecole Polytechnique,* and several officers of the national guard. Victor Hugo, his hand

raised, demanded and obtained silence from the anxious crowd which had invaded the rose-coloured square.

"My friends, you are waiting for news. Monsieur Thiers is no longer minister; Marshal Bugeaud is no longer commandant of Paris ——"

Applause broke out.

"—They have been replaced by Marshal Gérard and Monsieur Odilon Barrot."

The applause was thinner.

"The Chamber has risen. The king has abdicated."

The king's abdication was received with acclaim.

"The Duchess d'Orléans is Regent."

A great deal of catcalling and a few *bravos*.

One hour later, in the heated Saint-Antoine quarter, an uprising began on the Place de la Bastille. The workmen had obtained rifles from the soldiers in the barracks. Standing on the pedestal of the July Column, Victor Hugo tried to proclaim the regency and was received with protest:

"No, no! No regency! Down with the Bourbons! No king and no queen! No masters wanted!"

The poet tried to argue with them, and a man in a workman's blouse took aim at him.

"Silence, peer of France! Down with the peer of France!"

Someone whispered to Hugo: "You have kept your promise. Let us go."

The crowd parted at the cry of the young workman. The people of Paris had not fought in order that Helen of Mecklenburg reign over France.

At that same moment the Duchess d'Orléans, leading her two sons by the hand, the elder being the heir to the throne, went to the Palais Bourbon where she was received by the Deputies with acclaim. Dupin and Barrot were for the regency. Lamartine was undecided. As Helen stepped up to the speaker's platform the historian of the Girondins emerged from his meditation and cried out:

"I request that the President of the Chamber adjourn this

meeting for two reasons: first, the respect we owe to the national representation; and secondly, because of the august princess who is in the House."

The duchess refused to withdraw. Meanwhile, the insurgents invaded the Chamber, and she had finally to give way before the Revolution. The crowd cheered the advent of the young republic, acclaiming Lamartine and the provisional government. "To the *Hôtel de Ville*, Lamartine!" they cried, "To the *Hôtel de Ville* and the people!"

In the obscurity of the Saint-Jean room, pierced here and there by a faint glow, hundreds of voices greeted the provisional government.

"By what right," they cried, "do you assume government?"

"By what right?" asked Lamartine. "By right of the blood now flowing, the flames devouring your buildings, the nation without leaders, the people without a guide, without order, and perhaps tomorrow without bread. By the right of the most devoted and the most courageous. Citizens, since these words must be spoken: by the right of those who are the first to deliver up their lives to suspicion, their blood to the scaffold, their heads to the vengeance of peoples or of kings in order to save the nation. . . ."

An immense ovation rolled and echoed throughout the hall and to the far corners of the Place de Grève. At the windows of the *Hôtel de Ville*, in the blood-red light of the torches, two workmen, their faces black with powder, were unrolling a wide banner upon which had been written in charcoal: "*The Republic, one and indivisible, is proclaimed in France.*"

Visitors

The "workmen of the intelligence," Balzac, Lamartine, Dumas, Karr, Girardin, and others, burned with desire to be elected to the Constitutional Assembly. On the fourth of June, 1848, Hugo was elected from Paris by a vote of 86,965,

followed by Louis Bonaparte with 84,420 votes. The same popular suffrage raised to the bulwark the nephew of Napoleon and the poet who had chanted the Return of the Emperor. On the thirteenth, Hugo took his seat at the Assembly. Sending her tickets for the session, he wrote from his legislator's desk to Juliette: "It is possible that I may speak tomorrow and that you may observe my cormorant-like wheeling in the storm. That will entertain us both. Oh, sweet angel! where are the fields? Where is Pierre Laisne? Where is Nicolle, and our ancient little cabriolet, so dusty, so ugly, so frightful, and so charming? How much I should prefer broiling in Pierre's pot on the road between Provins and Coulommiers to boiling in this kettle called the Assembly, under which the terrorists and the communists have built such a roaring fire! Poor, adored being! I think of you and love you; and in the sound of the gibberish poured forth by a Monsieur Gabo who is at this moment Gasconading from the speaker's platform, I sit dreaming of our sweet memories. I hope that God has preserved for our life to come a few of those happy days we have had in the past. If He has not, what would be the good of living?"

On the twentieth, Hugo spoke in favour of closing the nationally-maintained workshops, demanding "firmness of action." "The monarchy," he declared, "had its wasters; and the Republic was becoming one of idlers." These imprudent words were to be remembered by the workmen of Paris, who were obliged to choose on the spot between enlistment in the army and discharge from the shops. The younger men among them, backed by their elders who were threatened with transportation into the provinces, rose up, and, on the twenty-third of June, the barricades were once more under fire. Hugo refused to "rest in the Assembly while the insurrection was going on." He, with Baune, Gaudin, Fleury, and a few others, was among those to go out with the troops and courageously read the decrees within hearing of the barricades. The twenty-

fourth found him on the Place Baudoyer, before the barricade defended by the troops guarding the *Hôtel de Ville*. Suddenly, a woman came round the corner of a street and walked slowly towards the barricades. Curses mingled with cries of caution burst from the soldiers.

"Hi! the wench. Will you go back, you bitch! Hurry along, there. She's a spy! Kill her! kill her! Down with the sneak!"

Their captain shouted: "Don't shoot! She is a woman!"

The woman who seemed, indeed, to be inspecting the lie of the land, pushed open a low door and shut it behind her.

Towards eleven of that same morning Hugo was back in his seat. An engineer who lived in the rue des Tournelles, a Monsieur Belley, came over and sat beside him.

"Monsieur Hugo," he said; "The Place Royale is on fire. Your house is burning. The insurgents went in through the little door that gives on to the cul-de-sac Guéménée."

"Where are my family?"

"They are safe."

"How do you know?"

"I've just seen them. Since nobody knows me, I was able to get through the barricades and come here. Your family first took refuge at the *mairie*"—Hugo had succeeded Moreau as mayor—"and I went there myself. Seeing the danger grow greater, I persuaded Madame Hugo to look for another refuge. She finally found shelter, with the children, in the flat of a chimney-sweep named Martignoni who lives under the arcade near your house."

"I know those worthy Martignonis, and am greatly relieved."

A little later, Hugo was out urging the insurgents at the Boucherat barricade to give themselves up, moderating the temper of the troops at the Temple, and trying there to appease the mob. That night he stopped in the rue Saint-Anastase with Juliette, who opined that what they needed was a bit less of the *Marseillaise* and a little more tranquillity.

For three days Victor tried to reach the Place Royale and tried in vain. He got as far as the rue Saint-Anastase, and not

finding Juliette at home, for she was hunting him throughout Paris, he left her these painful but reassuring lines:

"Monday, half past five.

"My sweet, adorable angel, here I am. You are not at home, and I know you to be upset. You have gone, and I am here: that poisons my joy, for I have so few moments to myself, and to see you would have meant to live again. I do not know if I shall be able to come back here this evening. I am one of sixty delegates charged with sovereign power concerning all measures to be taken. For three days I have made it my mission to conciliate people and arrest the flow of blood, and in a measure I have succeeded. I am dead with fatigue, having spent three days and nights awake, in the fray, with no bed to sleep in, almost no food or drink, and only an occasional moment in which to sit down on a pavement by way of rest. Some kind people gave me a glass of water and a bit of bread; another person gave some linen. I think this fratricide is over. Personally, I am safe and sound; but what disaster! I shall never forget the terrible things I have seen these forty hours past. My beloved, if you do not see me this evening, do not worry: it will only be because my duties will have prevented my returning. You must be absolutely without worry: everything is over, there is no more danger, absolutely nothing more to fear. Oh, I love you and I thirst to see you and embrace you, my beloved angel! Love me. Perhaps I shall see you to-night; certainly tomorrow. What joy it will be to see you again!"

When the law had won, two men met at the door of the former hôtel Guéménée. One was grave, slender, and still handsome despite his years, with a sharp, imperious profile: it was Lamartine, come to release Madame Hugo. The other, yellow and fatty, terrified, his teeth chattering, concealed behind a pillar, was Sainte-Beuve. The house was empty. On the twenty-fourth of June two columns of insurgents, entering through the *mairie* and the cul-de-sac Guéménée which leads to what is now number 6 of the Place des Vosges, had invaded the Place Royale

and the poet's home. From the *mairie* and the house they had begun a cross-fire upon the little band of troops who were still defending the cause of order. Through great good fortune, as Belley had informed Hugo, Madame Hugo and her children were safely out of harm's way.

"Let's burn up his shack," one of the insurgents proposed. "He was the fellow wanted the shops closed. Victor Hugo is the enemy of the people."

"He was a peer and now he is mayor. And what did we find at the *mairie* but ——"

"Uniforms and powder and guns."

"A whole arsenal."

A chorus of curses. They stripped branches from the trees on the square. This twenty-fourth of June was St. John's Day. Why not make a roaring gay fire for the people of Paris out of this home of a former peer of France? No: the wood refused to catch fire; the flame fluttered and died out. The linesmen vanished. Revolution is a good-natured wench: when she is not killing and burning, she is roaring with laughter.

The chief of the insurgents, a former schoolmaster named Gobert, who had been impoverished by Guizot, interposed his authority over these men in rags, armed with pikes, axes, mallets, old sabres, and defective guns:

"No disorder!" he commanded. "We are here to commandeer, not to pillage."

They marched through the empty room and past the terrorised eyes of an old serving woman, compelled despite themselves to maintain a strange silence. Scarcely a chair was out of place, but in Madame Hugo's bedroom they found the cradle of her last child still placed beside the tender mother's bed. A ragged and hairy insurgent, half nude, soiled by sweat and blood, touched the cradle which seemed to be rocking a new-born babe. The tumult of cannon redoubled. The last room, that at the head of the servants' stairway, was the master's study. Everything was scattered about "in the tranquil disorder of work begun." On a table they found a few

jewels, a seal of rock crystal, two of silver, one of gold chased by Froment-Meurice, and the "compass of Christopher Columbus, bearing the date 1489 and the inscription *la Pinta*."

"This is unique," declared Gobert. "This compass discovered America."

Near by stood a high desk, or rather two desks, one placed upon the other: there Hugo habitually wrote standing.

"Look here," said the chief. There was a craning of necks and an approach of a crowd of inquisitive black maws.

Long sheets of paper were strewn upon the desk. On one of them this title struck their eyes: *les Misères*.

Les Misères: les Misères of the people: *les Misérables*.

The Eagle and the Genius

Madame Victor Hugo refused to go back to the Place Royale. Since July they had been in temporary quarters at number 5 of the rue d'Isly. Fortunée Hamelin, who lived at 41, rue de la Tour-d'Auvergne, and "the Duchess Thérèse," whose house stood at 12, rue Laferrière, found for their friend a vast apartment near Madame Hamelin's, at 37, rue de la Tour-d'Auvergne, from which she had a panoramic view of Paris, that "kind of motionless ocean which has its grandeur, too." And a little later Juliette went to live nearer her god at 20, cité Rodier.

The family had not yet moved into this provincial oasis, so propitious to reverie and to the travail of the mind. Painters and carpenters still occupied the empty rooms. On this moist, grey October day they filled the house with the sound of popular songs blooming with roses and lilacs. Suddenly there was a knock on the door: some jolly fellow, doubtless, come to wield his plane or sticky, coloured paint-brush. But no: it was a *bourgeois* in a full cape, a low-set top hat; a man with awkward gestures, a blurred and hesitant manner, glassy, dreamy eyes, a thick moustache, and a heavy goatee. A foreigner, if his accent did not belie him.

"Monsieur Victor Hugo," he demanded.

"You here! But I haven't yet moved in!"

"May I speak to you?"

They sat side by side on a wood-box in the empty anteroom, the great-browed poet leaning towards the romantic prince, a probable bastard, a Socialist writer, a former prisoner of State, weighed down by the name of Bonaparte and nevertheless a candidate for the presidency of the Republic. Hugo listened to him. The Germanic bass voice was declaring solemnly:

"I have come to talk things over with you. I am being slandered. Do I seem to you a man out of my mind? Do I look like the person who would try to repeat the exploits of Napoleon? There are two men whom a great ambition might propose to itself as models: Napoleon and Washington. Given the Republic, I, who am not a great man, shall not copy Napoleon. But I am an honest man, and I shall imitate Washington. Napoleon may have been the greater, but Washington was the better. Between the culprit hero and the good citizen, I choose the good citizen. Such is my ambition."

The shadows of evening invaded the anteroom, modelling the pale, angular face and extinguishing the shifty glance. The dream of *Cromwell* and of the *Burgraves*, the dream of romantic imperialism, was about to come true. In silence, two men shook hands warmly. Two days later Hugo's paper, *l'Evénement*, supported the candidacy of Louis Bonaparte. The eagle had carried off the genius in its flight. Under the sign of Napoleon, Hugo would now be able to institute the dictatorship of thought. And he wrote with a frenzied pen these words which are not to be found in his complete works:

"Those who suspect us of a slight bias in favour of Louis Napoleon are not mistaken. We are like children, like the people—we love that which shines. We see a man in the street whose name is Napoleon, and we cannot refrain from saluting him as he passes. Without sharing this superstitious favour which accompanies Monsieur Louis Bonaparte, we

understand it. It is a touching appeal which France addresses to God. France needs a man to save her, and not finding him about her in the dark tempest of events, she clings with a supreme effort to the glorious rock of St. Helena."

Story of a Crime: Story of a Woman

Two days before, his feet on the fender of the fireplace in his drawing room, Hugo had said to Auguste de Châtillon:

"Well, Châtillon: France seems to be through with Louis Bonaparte. Where Lamartine failed, I shall succeed. It is I who will be president of France."

Châtillon rejoiced after his fashion: "That's good, now. Very fine. I know nobody more despotic than you are. And that's what we need. At least you have strength of will. You will accomplish something."

And to-day, the first of December, 1851, there were barricades again in the rue des Martyrs, rue de la Tour-d'Auvergne, and the cité Rodier. Bayonets, cannon, and sabres gleamed along the boulevards. Louis Bonaparte was murdering the Republic. He had attacked the people, and the people were forced to defend themselves. The beautiful Napoleonic dream was gone: Hugo now called upon *Jacques Bonhomme*, the John Bull, the Uncle Sam, of France.

Warned at nine that morning by Mademoiselle Dillon, a little actress, Juliette had rushed out cloakless into the December cold, mad with worry, in search of Victor Hugo. Was he still conferring with the representatives in the rue Blanche? Was he dictating to Baudin the proclamation of the Prince-President's outlawry? Was he damning the traitors and the dictator at the Porte-Saint-Martin with Arnaud de l'Ariège? Juliette found him nowhere. All that she had seen was groups of workmen and *bourgeois* collected before the hoardings which bore Louis-Napoleon's *Appeal to the People*. Beside every poster stood a tall member of the *Tenth-of-December Society* in a skirted coat which beat his skinny legs, his blunderbuss

cocked, moustache and goatee threateningly pointed, brows drawn up in a frown, a sergeant-major's stick in his fist, looking exactly like Daumier's *Ratapoil*, a Ratapoil explaining the *coup d'Etat*.

Home again, worn with fatigue, livid with chill and fear, Juliette took up her eternal rôle: she waited. Hours dragged by, each hour like a wound. Finally she heard his well-known voice in the night, and she jumped for joy. He! It was he!

"I could not go home. The police have surrounded my house."

"Oh, I shall hide you."

No, Maupas and his soldiers knew Juliette's home as well as they knew his own. Something better would have to be found.

"What about Auguste?"

"Auguste?"

"Yes, the wine merchant at the corner of the rue de la Roquette, whom you hid in your garret in the rue Saint-Anastase after the June uprising. You saved his life!"

"Yes, but we've never seen him again."

"We have, though, and not very long ago: the day of Balzac's funeral. I was a pall-bearer, and we were on the way to the Père-Lachaise cemetery. We went by Auguste's shop, and he was in the doorway with his young wife, and some workmen. When he saw me, he greeted me."

"Come: I'll go with you. I shall never leave you again."

She remained with him. She went with him to Auguste's, the wine seller who, like the rest of Paris, was little inclined to defend one of those representatives who had themselves crucified the Republic on the barricades in June.

It was Juliette who led him to Monsieur de la Roëllerie in the rue Caumartin, where he spent the night. It was she who went there on the third of December to fetch him to the Roysin Hall in the faubourg Antoine, where he was to preside over an assembly of the Left wing representatives. Towards nine in the morning a cab stopped on the Place de la Bastille, right

before the troops. A man with wavy hair, an immense brow, his eyes burning with fever, put his head out of the cab window, waved a tri-colour scarf, and cried to the soldiers:

"Louis Napoleon is a bandit! All his accomplices are sure to follow him to the hulks. They are there already. He who is worthy of the hulks is in the hulks. To deserve the chain is to wear it. Look at the man who is your leader and who dares command you! That man you take to be a general is really a transported convict!"

"They will shoot you down!" a sweet familiar voice spoke in his ear. A woman's hand squeezed his arm. Juliette, still Juliette! She went with him as far as the Saint-Antoine barricade which was red with the still warm blood of Baudin.

"Poor Baudin!" the poet said. "Last night I asked him how old he was. He told me he was not yet thirty-three. 'How old are you?' he asked. 'Forty-nine,' I said. And he answered: 'To-day, we are the same age.' "

A representative fell, but the people did not stir. The Committee of Resistance persisted in debating in a vacuum. Unable to abolish Bonaparte's lieutenants, Morny and Maupas, it fell back upon abolishing local customs duties!

Very late that night Juliette left Hugo before the house in which he had found new asylum, at Henri d'Escamps', 19, rue de Richelieu. On the fourth she lost him. Hugo, Michel de Bourges, Jules Favre, and Carnot met at dawn at Grévy's home. Juliette was running breathless through the streets among people who were beginning to ridicule Badinguet. Things were looking bad for Louis Bonaparte. The prefect of police, Maupas, sweating with fright, telegraphed to the Minister for Home Affairs: "I am surrounded. The insurgents are about to fall back upon the prefecture of police." But Morny smiled contemptuously at his cowardice. Had he not ordered Magnan to "strike hard" in the direction of the boulevards? The boulevards were one vast slaughter-house. Passers-by, women and children, fell under the flaming salvos. Children! In Hugo's *Châtiments*, soon to be read surreptitiously in France, the

murdered populace was to be reminded of this in the *Souvenir de la nuit du 4:*

Two bullets had struck the child in the head . . .

Four years earlier the people of Paris had driven out their king because they had seen a cart-load of corpses drawn through the boulevards. Now, bled by the June days, *Jacques Bonhomme* bowed his head. The last barricades, where Victor Hugo, whose arrest had been ordered by Morny, had dared courageously to show himself, were down. Who was to blame? Orders had been given not to defend them to the last. The representatives, who were ever philanthropists, had said to the combatants in every form: "Shed the least blood possible. Spare the blood of the soldiers and be careful of your own." But Morny had been less sparing of blood. This worthy cook who had dished up the *coup d'Etat* knew that an omelette could not be made unless eggs were broken.

And what of Juliette? In the midst of the slaughter, Xavier Durrieu perceived Victor Hugo on the shot-swept boulevard.

"Ah, there you are! I have just seen Madame Drouet, who is looking for you."

Disheveled and out of her mind, Juliette had wandered into the carnage. Where was the man she adored? where was her god? Killed, almost surely! Turning a corner she stumbled against a heap of corpses. "Horrors!" At her cry of indignation a soldier ran forward, pistol in hand. She threw herself into an open doorway and was saved. A little later she found Olympio, to her joy, black with powder and waving his scarf like a sword. Thus she arose ever at his side in the midst of battle, like a Homeric goddess beside the man she loves.

On the fifth, the battle was definitively lost. Yet step by step, through the blood-filled city, she followed her "dear little tribune." On the sixth, she found him asylum with a Monsieur de Montferrier whom she had known at Les Metz (and who, incidentally, was not related to Julie Duvidal Hugo). Long before dawn she stood shivering with cold in the doorway

of number 19, rue de Richelieu, waiting. A woman waiting thus draws upon herself the attention of the police. She would do better to stroll away and return. Two police officers were following her now. But she lost them soon and came back. The sky was an ugly grey in the morning light. Nobody was there. Impatient, she went up to the apartment. It was empty. The poet had slept out. What was she to do? Wait, wait again outside the house. The hours passed. She waited until afternoon, until he came in. In the doorway someone stopped him.

"Juliette!"

"Don't come in."

"Am I discovered?"

"Yes. Come."

They went out to the Palais Royal and hailed a cab.

"Where are we going?" asked the cabman.

"I don't know," Victor Hugo answered.

"I know," said she.

One hour later he was safe at Monsieur de Montferrier's. Juliette left for Brussels, which she reached on the eighth. . . .

The fourteenth of December in the great customs hall at Brussels. Juliette had been waiting for hours which seemed days, hours which passed as slowly as years. Suddenly her heart beat madly. That workman in a black cap, wearing a black cape, carrying a small black valise, the companion in mourning of *Marianne*—the incarnation of the Republic—whose passport was made out in the name of Lanvin and who, out of all his possessions, had been able to save only the manuscript of *les Misérables*—that was Victor Hugo! Juliette recognized him, fell into his arms, and sighed: "At last I am rid of that horrible nightmare!"

On the thirty-first of December, in a letter conveying to her his wishes for the new year, Victor Hugo expressed his gratitude to Juliette:

"My Juliette, how wonderful you were in those hard, dark days. When I had need of love, you, blessed angel, brought

me it. When, in my perilous hiding-places, after a night of suspense, I heard the key tremble in your hand, danger and darkness ceased to beset me: light came in through that door.

"Oh, let us never forget those terrible, and yet so sweet, hours when you were with me in the pauses during the struggle! Let us remember all our lives that dark little room, those old hangings, the two armchairs side by side, the meals of cold chicken brought in by you and eaten off the corner of the table, those tender talks, your caresses, your anxieties, your devotion. You were astonished by my calm, my serenity: do you not know whence they came? It was from you.

"God, you see, does not strike us mortally. He has thrown us here, but together. Praise God!

"To-night, when you read this, the new year will have begun. I want yours to begin by a sweet dream. Oh, if I were beside you, it would begin with a sweet reality! But since the night has parted us, dream of all the kisses I should be giving you. Fill your great and generous heart with all the sweet thoughts that mine pours into it. Be happy remembering that you have been good, brave, generous, and wonderful, and that if I am alive it is due to you, to your devotion. I kiss your feet and I love you."

Eight years later, at the head of the proofs of the *Légende des siècles*, in a note which has remained in manuscript, Victor Hugo rendered public justice to Juliette's heroic devotion:

"The order to shoot me if I were taken had been given in the first days of December, 1851. I had been warned of it in the course of a meeting which took place at Landrin's on the third of December by representative Napoleon, the son of Jérôme and the cousin of Louis Bonaparte, who was then making common cause with us against the president's treason.

"The fact that I was not captured and shot, and that I am alive at this hour, I owe to Madame Juliette Drouet who, at the peril of her own freedom, her own life, preserved me from every trap, watched ceaselessly over me, found shelter for me, and saved me; with what admirable intelligence, what zeal, and

what heroic bravery, God knows and will remember. She was awake day and night, wandering alone through the tenebrous streets of Paris, evading the sentinels, throwing off the spies, crossing the boulevards intrepidly in the midst of gun fire, sensing always where I was, and, when my life was in danger, always finding me. . . ."

PART THREE

THE APOTHEOSIS

I Tell Thee, Sir . . .

"I tell thee, sir, thee cannot be able to go in for this once. The gentleman, he is *composing*."

Good mother Sébert, who had a little tobacco and umbrella shop at number 27 of the Grand'Place, and who wore mourning since Victor Hugo told her of the death of the Republic in France, was yapping like a pug dog. Her caller, dressed in a tight coat of military cut and wearing an enormous red rosette in his buttonhole, smiled down upon her condescendingly. Then he puffed on his pipe, and said: "Monsieur Victor Hugo is always in for General Lamoricière."

Still muttering, the good dame dived out of sight of the old African soldier. What she had said was the truth. Victor Hugo was *composing*. He waved Lamoricière to an armchair beside the window through which the general saw the richest Brussels lace—the Hôtel de Ville, the Broodhuis, and the old Guild Hall. There was a knock at the door, but Hugo was not ready to drop *Napoléon le Petit*. His goose-quill scratched on while the door opened.

"General: Good morning, sir."

"Morning, Colonel."

"Charras!"

A powerful shoulder, the shoulder of a Porthos, pushed in the half-open door.

"Victor!"

"Dumas!"

This time Hugo got up. He embraced the kind-hearted giant who too had come to Brussels by way of protest against the strangling of *Marianne*.

"What is *Soulouque* up to?"

"Getting bigger every day."

"Damn it, Dumas, I am not talking about that agreeable piccaninny of yours ——"

"Whom Dorval once brought me in a basket of flowers and who has come with me to Brussels."

"No. The only *Soulouqi* who worries me is the one in the Elysée Palace. Aren't you just back from Paris?"

"Yes, but we've broken off all relations with that gent. However, I went to the rue de la Tour-d'Auvergne. . . ."

"Give it to me."

Victor Hugo seized avidly the letter from his devoted wife who was still in Paris, watching over his interests, his glory.

"Our life is still difficult. We have not seen a candle all winter. We even refuse invitations to dine out: for one thing, because it is more fitting that we live austerely, and for another, because I could not return any courtesy of this kind. Meanwhile I am happy to have learned from experience that my daughter and I are able to undergo these stern trials with perseverance. . . ."

Having read the letter, the poet looked up. Quietly, piously as into a chapel, the other companions in exile had entered. Besides Lamoricière, Charras, and Dumas, the room now held robust Schoelcher, Versigny, and de Flotte.

"Hugo, you have promised us a page of *Napoleon the Little*," said Lamoricière, twisting his military moustache. "We are listening."

The proscribed tribune did not wait to be asked twice. He took up a sheet of paper, rose to his feet, and read in a muffled tone:

"Ah, of what is France thinking? The nation must be reawakened. Its arm must be taken; it must be shaken; it must be spoken to. We must go into the fields, the villages, the barracks, speak to the soldier who no longer knows what he is doing, to the ploughman who has a picture of the emperor in his thatched cottage and votes the way he is told only because of that picture. The radiant phantom must be torn away which floats before their eyes. The entire situation is



Design by Victor Hugo.

JOHN BROWN

but one immense and fatal *quid pro quo* which must be shown in its true light, exposed to the very bottom. The populace, particularly that in the fields, must be disabused, stirred up, agitated, moved, shown the open pits, made to put its hand upon the horror of this government. The populace is good and honest. It will understand. Yes, Peasant: there are two of them, the great and the little, the illustrious and the infamous, Napoleon and Naboleon."

Fists were clenched. Oaths exploded in the room. Ah, if that poisonous adventurer had been there! . . . But suddenly as by magic the storm died away. Someone was scratching at the door. A spy perhaps. Dumas rushed to open. The others stood back. A strange-looking individual with a disquieting profile, a Semitic nose, Asiatic eyes, glided, insinuated himself, into the room. Hugo took both his hands: "Gentlemen, allow me to introduce Alexandre Weill, who is instructing me in the arts of the Cabala."

The shadows of twilight were falling from the lofty ceiling. Through the three wide bay windows they could see Gothic old Brussels reborn in the lights of evening. Led by Dumas and Schoelcher, the exiles went out, doubtless to some damp and smoky tavern. The high-ceilinged study with its wood stove was left to a great French poet and a Jewish cabalist who was revealing to him the mysterious science, the ancient, nebulous, and esoteric philosophy which is to be found in Hugo's *Dieu*, his *Fin de Satan*, and his *Légende*.

The "Ronsard" Is Sold

Brief catalogue of household effects, art works, curios, antique furniture of carved oak, Japanese lacquered and gilded objects, Boule marquetry clocks, bronzes, Saxe Porcelains, antique faïence, Venetian glass, terra cotta, marble busts, bronze medallions, paintings, drawings, books, Egyptian Journey, antique weapons, curtains, hangings, tapestries, couches,

porcelains, kitchen ware, all to be sold at public auction by reason of the departure of Monsieur Victor Hugo. . . .

"No elegy," wrote Gautier in the *Moniteur*, "could be more affecting than this simple list which conceals beneath the aridity of its style, its truth, a poem of mute anguish."

The peaceful house in the rue de la Tour d'Auvergne was invaded. The floors waxed with care by Auguste Vacquerie and Madame Victor Hugo sound with the steps of hundreds of visitors. The auctioneer, Ridel, dispersed to the four winds the intimate treasures patiently brought together by the poet over a period of thirty years. Paul Meurice piously bought several of Hugo's most beautiful drawings, including the *Burg à la Croix*. Arsène Houssaye, who was then managing the *Comédie Française* and had the courage to perform *Marion de Lorme*, bought a seal engraved for Hugo by Froment-Meurice with a sketch of the three graces. Madame Hugo's room looked like a museum: it was crowded with frames, medallions by David, Egyptian cloths; and books were strewn over the mahogany music desk. All the table service was exposed in the dining room. But it was chiefly into Victor Hugo's room that people crowded. Men and women of all classes stood in a queue in order to be privileged to sit in the Master's chair.

"Ah!" said a railway guard. "I want to be able to say that I sat in Victor Hugo's chair. That's the chair of a great man."

Down in the courtyard, where a rapid sale was being held of pallets, old furniture, and worn utensils, a worthy woman of the people drew back: "That kind Monsieur Hugo! There was a man who loved the people and ruined himself to defend them. They're selling him out because he hasn't any more money. People ought to get up a purse for him. I'd give twenty *sous* myself."

Boule, the furniture dealer, had just bought the tapestries. "Madame Hugo," he said; "I should like to have the history of three tapestries—the *Roman de la Rose*, the *Télémaque*, and the *Bajazet*."

Madame Hugo, who stood by with François-Victor and little Adèle, did not reply. She was listening to something else. Ridel had up for sale the famous Ronsard presented by Sainte-Beuve to Victor Hugo. This Ronsard was the last relic of the romantic *Cénacle*. Ulric Guttinguer, Louis Boulanger, Ernest Fouinet, Alexandre Dumas, Fontaney, and Lamartine had written in it poems in praise of the young singer of the *Odes*. And while it was being knocked down for one hundred twenty francs to Mademoiselle Blaizot, of 6, rue de Grammont, Adèle thought again of the sonnet which Sainte-Beuve had inscribed in this illustrious Ronsard. She thought of the *Livre d'amour*. Let Sainte-Beuve's Ronsard go its way! With it went a weight off her heart.

The Odour of the Savage Stream

Is this Notre-Dame de Paris sounding with all its bells? Is this Quasimodo sending forth great peals? Is this the red tocsin ringing from belfry to belfry, sounding the call to revolution?

In the prison colonies of Lambessa and Cayenne, in the mournful limbos of exile in Switzerland, Belgium, London, and the island of Jersey, the voices of martyrs, the voices of the proscribed, rise towards heaven. The dead wander along the Boulevard Montmartre, showing their gaping wounds, their avenging moans rising above the death-knell. In the great days of Esmeralda they heard "a mass of sonorous vibration ceaselessly sent off by innumerable bell-towers, floating, undulating, bounding, whirling over the town and prolonging far beyond the horizon the deafening circle of its oscillations." Now sounded the funereal and avenging bell, the breathless sigh of lamentation and invective:

> Sound to-day the death-knell, peal of Notre-Dame,
> And to-morrow the tocsin!

In answer to the sinister appeal catcalls filled all space, pale or bleeding shades arose. The burning Walpurgis Night is

less lividly lighted, rumbles with fewer subterranean quakes, shines with a glow less infernal than the glacial night of Hugo's *Châtiments.*

What phantoms! The child with "two bullets in his head"; the glorious soldiers of Liberty whose memory was not to be obliterated by the assassins of the fourth of December; Pauline Roland, dragged away to an African prison; Mandrin, Cartouche, Lacenaire, Saint-Arnaud; the victims, the heroes, the bandits, the headsmen; but over them all, in the epic flight called *Expiation,* the greatest of the shades, whose crime in the month of Brumaire was not to be expiated by defeat or captivity, by Moscow, by Waterloo, or by St. Helena; who was forced to wait until the Second of December for his chastisement:

> The horrible vision faded. In despair
> The emperor cried out with horror in the dark,
> Lowered his eyes and raised affrighted hands. . . .

But of a sudden a glow of hope shone in the light sky: *Stella,* the star of morning. Earth, wearied of prodigies and horror, stirred again while the marvellous star sang for the proscribed:

> Up, you who sleep! for he who follows me,
> Who has sent me before him,
> Is the angel of Liberty, the giant Light.

Already the bees fly from the imperial cloak. Are they about to rob

> The flowers of amber
> To give honey to men?

No. A legendary coach, that which bore Napoleon I and Joséphine to their coronation, is winding towards Notre-Dame. The nephew, the *Mustachioed,* who has succeeded *Little Clipped-Poll,* is on his way to marry *la belle Ugénie,* Eugénie de Montijo, the "rose of Granada." Again the bells sound, the peals of Notre-Dame mutter and roar:

> People, sing the wedding song!
> France has married murder.

Sound to-day the death-knell, peal of Notre-Dame,
And to-morrow the tocsin!

Is this in truth the voice of the bells? Is not this rather the moaning of the waves, is not this the sea that murmurs, that calls before the coming of the storm?

The bells henceforth to be heard by the poet of the *Châtiments* were the bells of the sunken city, the great peal of waves breaking against a reef, or the lugubrious sound of buoys revealing a whirlpool. When the Faider Law drove him from Brussels, Victor Hugo became one of the people of the sea. Jersey with its green sweetness, half English and half Norman, its softness, its ivy-hung cottages, and its fields bordered by vivid hedges, had offered hospitality to him, to Juliette Drouet who was living at Nelson Hall, at Havre-du-Pas, and to Madame Hugo, little Adèle, Charles, and François-Victor, all escaped from their prison and living with the poet at Marine Terrace, a bald and cubical house. And the asylum of Jersey extended to many other exiles whose turbulence shocked the islanders: Pierre Leroux, Ribeyrolles, Hennet de Kesler, General Le Flô and others. But what had drawn Hugo to Jersey was not its soft natural beauty, which was too much like that seen in the engravings of keepsakes, but the wild ruin of such old manors as Montorgueil, where Du Guesclin broke his fingernails, the high promontories, the strange grottoes, the sea breaking on rocks which seemed to have human or bestial faces, the innumerable vestiges of the stone age, of Savage Hougue-Bie, the cromlech of Rozel which he drew and where he heard the speech of the "Shadow Mouth."

Now and then he would linger a longer time than usual with Juliette in the sweet retreat of some familiar valley, listening to the songs of the birds in the dazzling Jersey sun; yet only epical nature, nature on a level with his genius, was able to hold and enchant him. The wild rocks of the grottoes which held souls captive seemed to send forth a mysterious moan which insinuated itself into him. There were times when the image of his dead daughter haunted him to the point of delirium.

At other times the death rattle of the victims of December pursued him. Where was he to fly from them? Into the woods, among the joyous birds, the flowering trees, all things that were bright and gay? No: at such moments only the violent sea could draw him magnetically and appease his emotion:

> Oh, let me, let me fly to the shore
> And breathe there the odour of the wild billows. . . .

Story of a Soul

"Do you remember our departures and how we used to press close against one another in the back of the mailcoach, your hand in mine, your soul in mine, lost to the existence of everything that was not our love? And when we reached one stage or another, and visited the cathedral or the museum, how we admired all things through the emotion with which our hearts were flooded. How many masterpieces have exalted me because you loved them and your lips threw light upon their mystery! How many steps I have mounted to the very top of interminable towers only because you were mounting them ahead of me! I got so that I lost all feminine coquetry. I remember once in the halls of Mont Saint-Michel I ruined a dress, the only one I had—and yet I laughed. And another time at Coutance—you remember Coutance 'whose bells tremble in the sea wind'—in sight of a horizon drowned in fog the rain poured suddenly down, as it pours in Normandy. You wanted to warm me in your cloak, but I refused, saying in imitation of I know not whom, 'this water does not wet.'"

Going through the lovers' lanes which led from the savage shore to the suave and flowery valleys towards the mild, nonchalant, and verdant fields of Jersey, the poet with the leonine head grew tender. How delicately Juliette's letter reminds him of their homeland. Did he remember!

Even his daughter Adèle's piano brought back the past. "Dear sweet angel," he wrote to Juliette on the twenty-first of May, "this is St. Julia's day, your saint's day. The sun is

rising, a beautiful May sun worthy of spring and of our ever-youthful souls. I look at the shining sky, and I look into my heart; and since I cannot take the sun in the sky, I take the love in my heart, and send it to you.

"I send you all that I owe you, all that is yours, that belongs to you—my thought, my memories, my hopes, my will, my passion, my spirit, my sadness and my joy. I send you twenty years of love in a kiss.

"As I write you my daughter, who is an early riser, is sitting at her piano playing a song from the Negroni festivities. The music, like a fairy, wafts to me all the splendour of our past.

"Let me tell you this: I look at that past with intoxication, but I see the future as equally enchanting. We are now together forever, without anxiety, without worry, without anguish. We have traversed and vanquished all that was bad and might have been fatal. We are in full possession of our two destinies fused in one. We have no longer the dawn-like bud of fresh love, but we have a love which has been tempered, which knows itself to be strong, and which looks for its continuance even beyond the grave.

"My beloved, let us turn our minds towards the beautiful and ever-new horizons of endless love. In the night of exile, in the growing shadow of age, let us gaze at the radiance of our hearts and thank God."

Since he began writing the story of his life, the *Histoire d'une âme*, and the *Contemplations*, his mind was ever on his memories. Under the flowering trees his years of childhood and youth and his beautiful hours of love hummed like bees. He remembered the smile of Mademoiselle Rose, the daughter of his first schoolmaster who had been so indulgent with the child of seven watching her draw on her stockings. With the help of his imagination, he added a few years to the child (for he had since then met a gracious Brazilian girl of the name of Rosa). Then there had been the pretty Basque girl who, in the garden at Bayonne, had said to him "Kiss me, now,"

and first revealed love to him. The beauty of Juliette in flower, a beauty worthy of Praxiteles, picking cherries like a heroine of Virgil's *Eclogues*, came into his mind. Then the dazzling blond loveliness of "the Duchess Thérèse" who equally with Juliette inspired this apology of free love:

Est on maître d'aimer?

"Is one"—to paraphrase—"to say whom one shall love?" And into the same reminiscential poems glided the faces of the poet's daughters, Léopoldine and Adèle. . . .

But all this was the past. Suddenly the soul in bloom withered. The sky filled with clouds. A rain storm swept down. The strolling poet had scarcely time to crouch in the tragic shelter of a cromlech standing alone in a field.

A cromlech, the cromlech of Rozel, where "Shadow Mouth" spoke; a fateful stone rising above the livid reef and savage surge. What an altar for the meditation of a *primitive* soul such as Hugo's! Born of a long rustic line, the son of a Breton woman who was more superstitious than Christian, the great poet, like all primitives, like all peoples of the glebe and the moor, like the old shepherds isolated in their troubled reverie, believed firmly in the spirits which inhabit things. His religious beliefs, which seemed to certain superficial minds to be simple, bare, even ridiculous, were the true heritage handed down by his peasant ancestors. These ancient ideas are older than Christianity: faith in the survival and constant presence of the dead, and the power of sorcery and magic. Not only did Hugo introduce into French poetry the words used by the populace, the language of the folk with all its colour, imagery, and expressiveness, but he also welcomed into it the beliefs of primitive man which were never eradicated from the ancient soil of France.

Pauca meae: One grave, two graves, separating yesterday from to-day: Léopoldine, and Claire, Juliette's dead daughter; the first at Villequier, the second at Saint-Mandé.

In order to rejoin her who had remained in France, her whose

anguished mother he had sung, Victor Hugo had taken counsel of his old friend Madame de Girardin; with her he had interrogated the tipping tables, *the grave of grass and of night bestrewn.* With Madame Victor Hugo, Auguste Vacquerie, General Le Flô, and Charles, who was a marvellous medium, he believed himself able to penetrate the secret of the dark forces. The first spirit which manifested itself at Marine Terrace was Léopoldine.

"Where are you?" asked Victor.

"Light."

"What must we do to join you?"

"Love."

And in the sad little house they had wept and believed. Since then, in the course of other pathetic watches, the night had brought them Chateaubriand, Dante, Racine, Balzac, Marat, Charlotte Corday, Robespierre, André Chénier, Mahomet, Shakespeare, Molière, Plato, and Jesus Christ. That these illustrious shades had elected to meet around the little table on the island of Jersey did not surprise the great Contemplator. Was he not alone in possession of the secret of the universe? Was not he the chosen of God? The revelation of the tables seemed to Hugo to confirm his religious ideas. Thus he wrote on the nineteenth of September, 1854:

"I have one grave question to ask. The beings who inhabit the invisible and who see the thought in our minds know that for about twenty-five years I have been concerned with the questions raised and plumbed by the table. On more than one occasion the table has spoken to me of this work; the Shade of the Sepulchre has insisted that I terminate it. In this work—and it is evident that this is known on high—in this work of twenty-five years, solely by the aid of meditation I have reached several results which now constitute the revelation of the table. I have distinctly seen, and to certain people reported, these sublime results; and I have glimpsed others which remain in my mind in the state of blurred lines. The great and mysterious beings who listen to me look, when they

choose, into my thought as a man might look into a cave with a torch. They know my conscience, and know that what I have just said is scrupulously exact. It is exact to the point that my miserable human self-esteem was even irritated for a moment by the revelation which flooded my little miner's lamp with the glow of lightning and of meteors. To-day, the table has confirmed those things which I saw whole, and has completed those which I saw only as fragments. In this state of mind I wrote: 'The being who calls himself the Shade of the Sepulchre has told me to finish the work I have begun; the being who calls himself Idea has gone further and *ordered* me to write verses in order to draw pity upon the captive and punished beings who compose what seems to us non-voyants dead nature. I have obeyed: I have written the verses commanded by Idea.'"

For a long time his companion in exile, Pierre Leroux, who was living at St. Clement, near Marine Terrace, had been reproaching him with working only for art: "Great poet," he had said to him twenty years before, "you know how to sing the superstitions of the past, but when you speak in your own name you are like all the men of your time—you can say nothing about either the cradle or the grave." And how often the last chief of the Saint-Simonians had repeated this old refrain on the sands of Samarez. The reproach was more or less justified. From the time of his youth, the function of the poet had seemed to Victor Hugo closely related to that of the magus. In the preface to the *Odes*, in 1826, the poet personifies the light which should march before the people. Very early he sensed his predestined rôle and compared himself to the inspired men to whom God had revealed Himself:

> The Earth called me Poet!
> And Heaven echoed Prophet!

Sainte-Beuve, who was in those days a mystic, displayed in the dedication of his *Consolations* more perspicacity than Leroux: "When you had wept enough," he wrote in 1830, "you withdrew with your eagle to Patmos, and there you saw clearly

into the most terrifying symbols. Thereafter nothing could make you blanch; you could plumb all depths, hear all voices; you were familiar with the Infinite."

But before the metaphysical abyss might open before the new John, there had to be the grave, and there had to be exile. That which politics had denied him, the isle of Jersey, that other Patmos, was to give him. He who had been a poet was now to be a philosopher, a magus, a prophet, a leader of the people:

> Why do you make priests
> When you have them among you? . . .
> These men are the poets.

Theism, Pythagoreanism, pantheism, and optimism. Everything is sensitive, everything thinks, God is everywhere. The most inanimate things have their moral responsibility. All progress is through suffering, through knowledge, through love which is the reflection of God. His was a composite philosophy in which the *Apocalypse* elbowed Pierre Leroux and Kardec, Fourier and Hennequin, Reynaud and Diderot, Boucher de Perthes and Delisle de Sales. But most of all Victor Hugo was indebted to the Cabala. Since 1836 Alexandre Weill had been instructing him in the science of the Zohar. In 1852, before he left for Jersey, Weill discoursed to him for the last time on the imperfection of man and the necessity of evil. All the Manichæan philosophy of the *Contemplations*, the *Fin de Satan*, and *les Misérables* stems from this conception: the existence of evil simultaneously with creation. God could not have made man otherwise than imperfect:

> He made him radiant, beautiful, innocent, adorable,
> But imperfect; for once on His own plane
> The creature, being equal with the Creator
> Would have been mingled and fused with God. . . .

God was everywhere, equally in the most miserable being and the most ethereal angel, in evil as in good. In separating the creature from God, evil freed it. The divine solitude which existed in the beginning was now peopled by evil, by matter,

with free beings. Therefore—and it is at this point that Hugo becomes a Christian, a schismatic Christian, but a Christian nevertheless—the most perverse soul may be redeemed, forgiven. "Pitiless rocks depraved by man," souls expiate their human crimes in these stones, expiate "the first fault" which "was the first burden."

But this chastisement, this migration of fallen souls, would one day end; and the magus of Marine Terrace, hearkening to "Shadow Mouth" by the cromlech of Rozel as well as to the revelation of the Cabala, announced the return of all souls into God.

> As the sun draws to him the cloud . . .
> God, with his magnetic eye draws the darkness . . .
> And will bring back into the universe of archangels
> The universe of pariahs . . .
> And Jesus, bending over weeping Belial,
> Will say to him: "Is this then you?"

Thus in 1854, with profound sincerity and an anguished sense of his carnal frailties, with the conviction that many of the secret aspects of things still remained hidden from him, Victor Hugo felt himself called upon to found a new religion. According to this God-inspired man, his religion would reveal to the world two new truths: a belief that everything in nature, even the stones, possesses a conscious soul; and the idea of a universal forgiveness which metes out to each crime its necessary remission.

It was in this second state that Vacquerie photographed the closed eyes and inspired face of the new *Chosen of the Almighty.* Beneath the photographic print, so that there might be no mistake, the seer himself wrote in his large, powerful magus-like hand: *Victor Hugo listening to God.*

Victor Hugo was then, as Michelet wrote, "a whipped force, the force of a man marching for hours in the wind and taking two sea baths a day." The storm blew within him and about him, and it was a terrible storm, for the archipelago of the Channel is the country of wind.

"Between these islands a great draught blows. A bad law for the sea . . . and almost no rest in this corner of the ocean. Here the waves are violent and the billows surge in anger, so that the cliffs are strangely hammered and the coast is torn. . . . Nothing is more strange than the enormous frogs of rock which seem to rise out of the water in order to breathe like giant nuns, and hasten onward, bowed along the horizon. The petrified folds of their veils are formed by the flight of the wind. Ordinary beings, stuck down into the rocks, seem to raise human arms, one sees their hands. All this is the shapeless coast. . . . As one goes forward, or away, or drifts or turns, the shore seems to crumble. There is no kaleidoscope more apt for dissolution: forms break up only in order to reshape themselves; the perspective swallows them up. Here is a block that becomes a tripod, then a lion, then an angel, and it opens wings, and in a moment it is a seated figure, reading a book. Nothing changes shape like the clouds unless it is the rocks. . . . Here the one floats in decomposition, the other is stable and incoherent. A residue of anguish remains in creation."

It was in this apocalyptic landscape that the mystical pantheism of the exile expanded, that the divine revealed itself to this *solar soul*, that God seized Victor Hugo. The *consolament* of the Cathari, the wild mysticism of Montségur, and the cruel trances of the great mystics were to be made known to the singer of the *Fin de Satan*. *Et je mourus*, "and I died," he was to say to God at the end. This mystical death, this great trial following which he was to attain serenity and speak ever after in a tongue inspired by God, he has himself described in a language which is that of the old occult tomes:

And I died . . .
In thy breath of fog or of light I vibrate,
Heaven, as if bearing in me the filament of creation,
As if all the invisible threads of being
Were entwined in the cosmos filling my breast . . .

Standing on the rock of Jersey, whipped by the Four Winds of the Spirit, Victor Hugo, overwhelmed with awe, gazed into the face of God.

DEPARTURE

The isle of Jersey was in an uproar. The exiles' journal, *l'Homme*, had seriously outraged the Queen of England. A letter signed by Félix Pyat, Rouge, and Jourdain, had attacked Queen Victoria violently for having received Napoleon III at Windsor and having returned his visit. "You have sacrificed everything: your queenly dignity, womanly scruples, aristocratic pride, English sentiment, race, rank, sex, and even modesty, for love of that ally." The exiles were threatened with nothing less than lynching by the peaceful inhabitants of St. Helier and the peasants in their blue and pink ribboned hats which made them resemble Florian's shepherds. At every crossing the barrel-organs played *God Save the Queen* while all the passers-by uncovered and sang in chorus. Ribeyrolles, the editor of *l'Homme*, Thomas, a former prisoner of Mont Saint-Michel, and Pianciani, a representative of the Roman people, were expelled. Victor Hugo and thirty-five other refugees protested. This time it was not the Queen, but Monsieur Louis Bonaparte who was in question: "The Assizes await Monsieur Bonaparte." The answer came quickly. On the twenty-seventh of October 1855, Leneveu, the constable of St. Clement, informed Victor Hugo that he had one week in which to leave the island.

On the thirty-first, Hugo was at Guernsey, the island of Cornet Castle, a witness to the battles between Cavaliers and Roundheads; St. Peter Port, tiered in the form of an amphitheatre; Carey Castle, its Oriental silhouette in profile on the horizon; the Moorish tower built on the heights of the town in honour of Queen Victoria; magnolias, pines, eucalyptus, the whole giving St. Peter the look of a little Algiers—

except that the sky was grey, gloomy, charged with rain, and the Channel broke and roared from reef to reef.

A group of French people stood on the jetty. One was a young man with a silky beard, a fleeting forehead, beautiful dreamy eyes, and the grace and distinction of a Musset: this was François-Victor. Near him stood a rosy-cheeked lady with prematurely white hair, accompanied by her maid—faithful Suzanne: this was Juliette Drouet who, since her arrival at Jersey, had been receiving the great poet's son in her home and at her table. With them was Victor Hugo, long greying hair floating beneath his soft felt hat, a collar open at the throat, his clean shaven face showing powerful muscles, and the stigmata of adversity, suffering, internal vertigo, and genius entrenching his leonine mask. Two days later Charles Hugo debarked, followed by his mother, his pretty, dreamy-eyed sister Adèle, and by Auguste Vacquerie, who had taken his dead brother's place in Victor Hugo's home.

In order to reach Hauteville, the upper part of the town where Victor had established himself in order to be near Juliette and where, thanks to the success of the *Contemplations*, he was soon to buy Hauteville House, Charles had to cross the town and take the path which his father had taken on the last day of October. Here was the High street with its shops, its jewellers' windows filled with jet, its stores in which porcelain, English potteries, and jewels of Genoan coral and lava were shown, and best of all its wax museum, where for a penny one could see Cromwell and Nelson, Uncle Tom and Lord Palmerston, Sultan Abdul Mejid and the non-conformist Wesley; and Mary Queen of Scots, in her headdress and Scots gown, side by side with the proprietress of the exhibition, with whom the unfortunate sovereign was generously sharing the remnant of cotton that constituted her royal mantle. Beyond the High street came a crisscross of roads and then the interminable steps which, through an evil-smelling slum, led to Hauteville.

The Absent Are Present

After the Jersey house which had been visited by a lady in white, here was the haunted mansion of Guernsey, haunted before Victor Hugo moved into it on the seventeenth of October, 1856, and haunted ever since: Hauteville House. This proud, frowning façade; this entry lost in a chiaroscuro which Rembrandt would have loved; this monumental door; these vestiges of the past, wormeaten panels, precious furniture, India Company porcelains, Chinese silks, royal tapestries, all won in high battle through the seas and the centuries by buccaneers or craftily brought home by the pillagers of wrecks on the Guernsey reefs and received by the great exile—all this so redolent of blood, voluptuousness, battle, adventure, had been captured for the eternity of glory by the grandson of a Nantese soldier of fortune named Trébuchet and finally assembled into one precise and powerful symphony by the beat of genius. Here was something that spoke to the imagination, excited the nerves, seized the senses, disconcerted the reason. Here everything had a soul. In the dining room, with its lilac and flame-coloured Delft tiles, between two windows opening on a garden blooming with hydrangeas and giant fuchsias in the shade of green oak, eucalyptus, and fig trees, close to the fireplace over which the Virgin and Child gleamed like the image of Liberty.

> (The people are small, but they will grow
> In your sacred arms, oh, fertile mother,
> Oh, sainted Liberty with conquering step,
> Bearing the child who bears the world)

—here stands the armchair of the ancestors: *Absentes adsunt*, the Merovingian chair built, decorated, and illuminated by Victor Hugo with the help of his faithful Mauge, the Guernsey wood-carver. In this chair the soul of the ancestors sat at table with the family. No one had the right to seat himself in this *sella patrum defunctorum*. Let him beware who would lift the iron chain that bound its two arms. (On one of the

arms is engraved this name and date: *Georges, 1535*—the name of a captain in the army of the Duke de Lorraine from whom Victor and his father thought themselves descended. On the other arm, *Joseph-Léopold-Sigisbert Hugo, 1828*). The servants were afraid of this venerable chair. From door to door, throughout St. Peters it was whispered that General Count Hugo came back to his son's house. Had he not been seen on a certain Christmas eve, his uniform burnt by the powder of Thionville, sitting down in the chair built by the poet's hands? There was another day when a guest raised the iron chain and started to sit in the chair. A cry of indignation and horror stopped him, and Victor Hugo rushed forward to prevent the profanation.

Absentes adsunt. At the head of the stairs was a half-open door and beyond it first a red and then a blue drawing-room as bewildering as the *Arabian Nights.* This Chinaman in gilt wood holding up the purple dais had already been seen in the apartment in the rue de la Tour d'Auvergne. There were other ghosts about, thanks to the diligent zeal of Madame Drouet's maid, Suzanne, who had brought them from the cité Rodier where the Hugo family had deposited the dearest of their possessions. These beautiful statues, contemporaries of Guardi and Casanova, had, if the poet was to be believed, adorned the Venetian barge of state, the Bucentaur and witnessed the marriage of the Doge and the sea. Ghosts again were the marvellous and exceedingly rare tapestries of "white jet" gleaming with metal and glasswork, marine fauna, corals, madrepores, gilded seaweed, purplish sea anemones, immense birds with golden scales like legendary fish, peacocks whose tails were ocellated with little gold crescents sewn with gold thread. These royal hangings, the master would explain, which were bought in the rue de Lappe, although they came from the château of Fontainebleau, had belonged to Christine the Great, and had heard the moan of passion of the virile Queen of Sweden and the moan of death of Monaldeschi.

Absentes adsunt. In the blue drawing room, among the

japonic objects and the *chinoiseries* some of which Hugo, who was as fond of Pompadour and Far Eastern rococo as of Gothic art, had picked up in Holland, was an inkstand of green jade given him by Juliette. This tiny pagoda was to be enlarged out of all being by the master in his *Trois cents,* transformed into a temple built by Cambyses for his favourite, Artha:

> . . . Artha whom king Cambyses loved
> So much that he built her a temple of green jade.

Thus long before, in the rue de la Tour d'Auvergne, the little bronze crucifix that lay on his desk had become the central feature of the greatest and most masterly of his drawings, the *Bourg à la croix.*

The absent are present. Here, on the staircase, were the mysterious letters dictated by the table on the isle of Jersey: *Ede, i, ora!* Eat, go, pray! There, in Madame Hugo's room, were the relics of Léopoldine, among them the touching portrait done by her mother in 1837, and over it a fragment of the red frock worn by Didine as a child.

Absentes adsunt. Never had Garibaldi slept in that vast oak gallery, a true Gothic and Renaissance museum panelled in luxurious and simple wood, cut up with complicated secret pockets into which manuscripts and letters were stuck away, and lighted by the forty-branched candelabra designed and carved by the great poet-woodworker. Even so, this rich chamber and this bed of pomp placed under the sign of death, were to retain forever the memory of the liberator of Italy, the hero of the Thousand.

The absent are still present. Beyond the stairway, at the top of that rigid ladder, was the holy of holies, the "sublime garret" of genius.

Absens adest: he is still present. Here was the hall lined with books, with the *Délices de l'Angleterre,* and Mathieu's *Histoire de la Turquie.* On the right, another hall leading to a tiny room like a ship's cabin which was his bedroom. It

contained a Venetian dresser, a wardrobe, a table, a Louis XIII chair with spiral legs, a toilet table, a low hung bed, low enough so that the pencils and paper lying on the floor could be seized during the night and drawings or poems sketched in the dark hours in which these strange nocturnal inspirations came.

Up at six, asleep at ten,
Dinner at six, supper at ten,
Make a man live ten times ten.

The master of Hauteville House never ignored this precept which was carved over the dining-room door. He was up at six. Before going to crush in his teeth a half dozen oranges and swallow them peel and all, he whose human machine was more powerful than anything ever known before would walk up to his look-out, the high turret, the crystal room he had had built, the lighthouse from which, far beyond the islands of Jethou, Herm, and Sark, he could see the coast of France, "the shores that call to us." Beside his rococo porcelain stove, on the glass tiles, the genius dressed in red would strip to his skin, plunge into the icy water which had been exposed the night long to the sea winds, and then exercise his magnificently youthful athletic body.

Thereafter, while the sun was transforming the glass house into a ship's boiler, a burning furnace—unless it be that a winter storm was turning his bath water to ice and making the look-out a Siberian cell—in the blinding light of July or the leaden and livid grey of December, the poet, once more in his clothes, would hasten to his desk. Desk? It was a shelf fixed against a wall by two iron brackets. His inkwell was a stone hollowed out by the sea. There his exalted thoughts would grow stable and the life of everyday would win him back. In the hours which followed, what was measureless in him would emerge as superabundance of cerebral strength and not as lack of balance. There among the reefs and the storms, in hearing of the gull's cry and the breaking waves,

in this lighthouse of the mind, his masterpieces were born: the *Légende des siècles*, *les Misérables*, the *Chansons des rues et des bois*, the *Travailleurs de la mer*, *l'Homme qui rit*, *Quatre-vingt-treize*, the *Théâtre en liberté*, and *Toute la lyre*.

Absentes adsunt. His grandson Georges, who was one day to describe him coming down the stairs from his look-out, evoked with his delicate high-souled modesty, the high house of the *Légende* and the great laborious shade never to be absent from it:

"Hauteville House remains for us the 'house of souls' for everything in it speaks of the dear departed. *Absentes adsunt:* these words inscribed over the massive armchair which he said was that of our ancestors invite one to meditation, and in the evening, when the windows are open on the starry night, it is hard to say if the murmur brought by the wind is the sound of the sea or the sound of the past.

"He used to roam slowly through this house built by him with the patience of the decorator of a Gothic cathedral and with the Far-Eastern phantasy of his brush. In this mysterious house every piece of furniture, every curio, almost, bore the mark of his work. I can see him now, walking with his rythmical and heavy step up the stairs carpeted with a design of roses and dead leaves in the heavy felt, one hand in his trousers pocket, the other lying heavily on the banister, on his way to his workroom.

"He would go into the look-out, that shadeless greenhouse on the roof, in the full blue of the burning sky reflected by the sea, and, on a small board, before a looking-glass decorated by him with a strangely petalled flower whose varnish had swollen and cracked in the heat, he would write. . . ."

When Two Hearts . . .

In *La Pallue*, a little house set a bit higher even than Hauteville House, a window was thrown up and Juliette put out her beautiful frost-powdered head. Juliette was on the watch,

looking now at the fleeting clouds swept by the dawn, and now towards the look-out, the "crystal room" where he was writing. As she looked, she saw suddenly the living flame in that light-house of the spirit, the red-garbed form of her "dear little workman" erect. He was pacing to and fro, waving his arms, signalling his love to her who wafted him bouquets of kisses. The shivering of the leaves and the song of the gardens and the woods combined with her smile to fill the early morning with ecstasy. Her first smile upon the genius she adored was "one of those smiles which send a gleam of light into your soul the whole day long." In the turret caressed by the dawning day, the red clothes were stripped away and she saw a white apparition, an ancient god bathing in sunlight and sea-water. From afar she attended his scrupulous toilet, contemplating avidly the beautiful virile body which, despite the years, she had not ceased to love equally with its heart, its brain, its genius, its heroic splendour. Then, when again he was clothed in flame, the god took up his arduous labours, hammering out in the call of birds and in the howling of the storm the great Alexandrines of his *Légende*, the sublime prose of his *Misérables*. Juliette went about her humble tasks: she gathered roses in the garden so that when evening came he might be able to bathe his tired eyes in rose water; picked cherries to be made into tarts and carried later in the day to Hauteville House; collected warm eggs which, with the tarts, were to know the happiness of entering into the house of the poet.

He came to her daily after the luncheon hour, and they would stroll to the whirlpool, to St. Martin, to Plainmont, to the visioned House, or simply out to Fort George or Fermain Bay, where bushes of wild fuchsia and rhododendron flowered. When they came back, and until the hour of dinner when he would bring his sons and his friends, Juliette would take up her work. Here was a crowded page of the *Légende* to be copied out neatly, and with such absorption that she forgot the passage of the hours. It was so good "to send one's pot-

hooks running after the winged thought, to be the first in the world to skim the cream off this work of genius and drink its poetry fresh from the spring before anybody had tasted a drop of it."

To be sure, he was somewhat selfish. Absorbed by his metaphysical visions, wafted away by the epical wing which beat over him, careful of the dignity and integrity of his home life, he did not always remark the humble sacrifice, the silent plaint, of this kneeling woman. And yet, as, still, he had not ceased to love her, he also, for his part, bowed his head before the most devoted of companions: "I went alone to your room a moment ago, my beloved," he wrote to Juliette on the twenty-seventh of May 1860: "and do you know why I went there? I went to kiss your slippers which were there, and to beg them never to lead you anywhere save beside my love."

Poor Juliette! Care, sorrow, danger, love, and the travail which moved always in love's train had aged her prematurely. When, in May 1857, Dumas asked permission to pay his respects to her, Juliette cried out in poignant anguish: "No! Do not bring him here. I should be ashamed to show myself, so completely does the mask of illness and age hide the youth of my soul." But she judged Dumas badly. The kind negro with the sensitive heart came nevertheless to La Pallue; and when he saw himself received with a somewhat melancholy grace, he merely increased his own verve, gaiety, and enthusiasm. He insisted upon being handed Juliette's album and writing in it improvised verses to her eternal youth.

If only she could have believed it! But the lone woman at La Pallue, who was soon to be mistress of Hauteville-Féerie, a healthier, less humid house fitted out for her by the fantasy of the poet whose delicacy re-created there their room in the rue Saint-Anastase which had been the scene of so much love—"that red and golden room" where he saw her again "surrounded by the beautiful peacocks embroidered on the tapestry, tending her flowers and chatting with her pretty little green bird"—this poor Juliette was still to be given cause for pain.

Olympio, who had remained as young in body as in mind, a fallen archangel become a faun, lingered overlong among the songs of the streets and the woods. Nothing so invigorated the Biblical patriarchs as the love of their young handmaidens. Here was a Boaz, bearded after 1861 by way of preserving himself from colds in the throat, at whose feet too many "bare breasted" Ruths had lain. But his returns were worth the pain of beginning over again; he knew how to win forgiveness; the worst misunderstandings never lasted long with him. In August 1862, when the poet and his sons sailed over to the isle of Sark, that "romantic island" of rock and verdure, Juliette longed to go with them. She was asked, but with her customary tact she refused to show herself in public among those she so dearly loved. The hours passed mournfully. In vain she tried to copy out verses, to learn by heart the songs in the *Châtiments*: all the morning long her eyes were turned obstinately upon a stray little goat which had been tied to a hedge and which nobody recognised as his own. Towards evening a great sadness came over her. She seized a sheet of paper lying on the little oak table and wrote as if beating her breast: "I have been lacking in foresight: I should have guessed that asceticism in love is possible and sweet only when one is young. Later it becomes a mournful and lugubrious solitude, almost death. . . ."

But a door banged, a familiar step was heard: she sprang up. He was there, hale, tanned, redolent of wave and reef with lips salted by the sea. She was comforted to the bottom of her heart by the kiss, the wild anemones, and these sublime verses written on the back of an envelope:

> I gathered this flower for you upon the hill,
> On the steep cliff that bends above the sea,
> That only the eagle knows and can approach:
> Calmly, this flower grew among the rocks.

When Juliette had read this new poem inspired by her she understood that Victor, a flower growing in the rocks of exile, was promising to die upon the breast in which he had found

such an abyss of tenderness. She knew that despite everything he would keep his promise. Sobbing, she fell into his arms and said: "How good you are! I do not regret my day."

Later, another time, on the twentieth of May 1862, on the eve of St. Julia's day, the feast day of Julienne known as Juliette, the exile went off by himself through the brakes and the charming ravines which drop from Fort George down to the sea. Myrtle bushes, exotic vines, woodbine, twisted willows, oaks bowed by the sea wind, retarded his advance. Under his wide Breton hat, with his newly bearded "bandit-genius" face, he was musing and meditating. Within himself he was carrying *les Misérables*. From time to time the exile stopped to gaze with delight between the branches of the yews or the wild fig trees at a blue little creek among the golden rocks which reminded him of Provence or of the Corsica of his infancy. At last his wandering steps took him to the solitary shore of Fermain Bay which ends at the shady point of St. Martin, where he loved to dip his muscular body into the caressing water. He had gone off this day to isolate himself, to work. Was he meditating Marius's idyll, Thénardier's infamy? No: he was thinking of Juliette's saint's day, of her who had not been able to accompany him and to whom he wrote these loving lines which she was to read with her lips:

"How am I not to think of your feast day? Here is all nature in its beauty. The earth is like a great green flower; the sea is like a great blue flower; the firmament full of sun is like a flower of gold. Everything gives off an immense longing for happiness, which I send to you. The birds sing, the beach sings, the plain and the mountain laugh, and I am here alone, thinking of you. And for me, in all this infinity, there is the thought of you, as last night, in the wide twilit sky which we saw together, there was a tiny star which gleamed by itself more brightly than all the sky.

"I came here a moment ago to work, but I could do nothing save love. I turned towards you, and my soul refused to leave your soul. Then I spoke to it and said: do as you wish. I

took my pencil, tore off the back of a letter from I know not what worthy Englishman, and began to write to you. This will be your birthday bouquet. At the tip of a branch quite close beside me is a redbreast looking on with approval. Oh, yes, you are truly my beloved!"

Juliette was all adoration. On the seventeenth of February 1863, as ecstatic as a mystic, this was how she greeted the thirtieth anniversary of their first night together:

"Good morning again my beloved, in full sunlight, in full love and in full happiness. Good morning again and again as on that morning thirty years ago when my eyes followed you down the boulevard and you turned back to look at my window once again before disappearing into the rue du Temple. This memory is ineradicable. Everything in my heart is in the same place and in the same order as on the night when I first gave myself to you. These thirty years of love have passed through my life like a single, uninterrupted day of adoration, and I seem to myself younger, stronger, more alive for having loved you than I ever was. Heart, body, soul; all is yours and lives only in you and for you. I smile at you, I bless you, I adore you. . . ."

Twenty months later, on the twentieth of October 1864, Philemon replied to Baucis in those beautiful verses which will always be repeated by lovers eternally in love with one another for whom the passage of the years and the whitening of the hair have but fortified and consecrated their tenderness:

Quand deux cœurs, en s'aimant, ont doucement vieilli,
O quel bonheur, profond, intime, recueilli! . . .

"When two hearts have loved and gently have grown old, how profound and intimate and tranquil is their happiness!"

His "inner voice" was never to cease to recite this poem to Juliette. Enchanted, filled with wonder, happy at last, she blessed the exile which drew them together: "If I dared," she wrote, "I should ask heaven to prolong our stay here for the rest of our lives. Doubtless this little 'pocket country' seems

to him cramped, since he is constantly holding out his arms towards the *shore that calls him*, towards the true homeland; but is not his glory great enough to render Guernsey 'as big as the world.'?"

The Epic

"France has not the epic mind." What nonsense! France has the *Chanson de Roland* and the *Légende des Siècles*.

Victor Hugo's genius was never other than epical. It was not for nothing that the Bible was his first book. From the *Chant de fête de Néron* to the *Fiancée du Timbalier;* from the *Feu du ciel* to the *Têtes du sérail;* from *Cromwell* to *Hernani* and *Ruy Blas* to the *Burgraves*, the epos dominates his entire work. It had triumphed in the *Châtiments*, but now we had the *Légende:* "The blossoming of mankind from century to century, man rising out of the darkness into the ideal, the paradisiacal transfiguration of the earthly inferno, the slow and irresistible budding of freedom, the right to this life and responsibility for the next—another kind of religious hymn in a thousand lines, with a profound faith in its entrails and a high stone upon its summit. . . ."

I had a dream: the wall of the ages appeared to me.

The Sacre de la Femme is a glorification of love, the apotheosis of the fecund and eternal Eve in her flesh and her grace. It is beautifully fitting that the epical masterpiece of France be placed under the sign of womanhood:

Flesh of woman! ideal clay! O, marvel!

Cain; the first crime and the first awakening of the conscience. The lions licking Daniel's feet; Ruth and Boaz, whose story had lingered so firmly in Victor Hugo's imagination from the time he was a child in the Impasse des Feuillantines. *Booz endormi:* the perfume of clusters of asphodel; the breath of the night blowing over Galgala; the nuptial shadow; and in the

sky where from time to time something blue and like a wing seems to pass, the bright crescent of the moon, a "golden scythe in the field of the stars."

Chevaliers errants, whose legitimate heir the poet feels himself to be, he who has always defended the cause of the weak against the strong; *Chevaliers errants* magnificently rehabilitating Don Quixote, and showing us, under helmet and halberd two blond pages pink-cheeked as girls, transformed into phantoms to whom the demon lends a soul:

One was called Oliver and the other's name was Roland . . .

On an island in the Rhône takes place the duel between Hauteclaire and Durandal to attest the judgment of God: two young heroes without fear nor reproach magnified by the ardour of the old *chansons de geste*. And Roland dead, dead at Roncevaux; Charlemagne, the emperor with the flowing beard, returning home from Spain saddened to death. Who now will take for him Narbonne, the city he covets? The old captains lower their heads and make evasive excuses, as did Napoleon's marshals towards the end. But another child "pink of cheek and with white hands," presents himself before the emperor and offers boldly to take the city:

The next day Aymery took the city.

Spain, where in his blonde childhood Victor Hugo had lived; Spain which he had sung, had seen again with his beloved's arm in his; Spain grave and burning, the hot deep earth of blood and love, the land of thirst-parched torrents and snowy peaks; Catholic and Mozarabic Spain where the muezzin chanted and the pyre flamed while converted Jews moved about with long shining eyes; Spain to whose genius no French poet since Corneille had been so devoted; Spain which brought back the venerated father at whose feet the young poet had laid his glory. *Bivar*, a dark wood, a square manor house flanked with towers, a small patio where, going about his humble tasks in

the house of don Diego, the Cid Campeador, Ruy Diaz, has only to make a sign in order to summon high above his tents, their

Wings spread in the wind, the swarm of chanting victories.

The Spain of the little *Roi de Galice;* memories of a journey to the canyons of Tolosa; the Spain of the sierras, the Pyreneean peals where the footprints of the lizards mark the snow and are brushed by the wings of the eagle. You, Spain, live again in these wild, sonorous paintings while Durandal gleams and repulses with its mighty edge the besiegers of the little prince. Pyreneean Spain with its awesome silences, its shining summits, its hollow valleys and dark forests where the bear makes his home. The *Cid exilé* is Hugo himself risen against the emperor. At St. Peter Port his hairdresser maintained that each hair of Hugo's beard was really three hairs, so stiff was it; and he trembled at the thought of shaving the great man even as the barber of Ruy Diaz trembled:

> The barber of the hamlet says it's true
> That now and then the Cid comes calmly in
> And takes his seat. . . .
> The barber shaves the hero while he quakes. . . .

Spain, exquisitely cruel, mystical and gallant; the Spain of Philip II and of Theresa of Avila. Spain where in the dusky gardens the sensuous odour of carnation and jessamine stifles the stench of slaughter. The Spain of Aranjuez and of the Escorial where you linger before the *Rose of the Infanta* as long as before the grey and golden paintings of Velázquez.

Spain was the land of his adoption, the kingdom of his childhood and his dreams; but the true homeland of the poet, the land which rings roundly in the name of Hugo, which announces like the sound of the trumpet the glorious Roman name of Victor, the land of his father, of his fathers, of his presumptive ancestors, is Lorraine, the Rhenish earth where as in the beautiful name *Victor Hugo* two races meet and are united. The genius of the *Légende des siècles* is the genius of the Rhine—not that of Walhalla, not a Prussian, but a Rhen-

ish genius. "He set the French soul against the Rhenish background."

The great knight of Alsace, Eviradnus, is again Victor Hugo, the wandering knight, the poet-knight, righter of wrongs, defender of the weak, sworn enemy of all who abuse their strength, the "pursuer of crime."

His hair has grown white; he "begins to feel the weight of the hoary years"; but he remains ever "the gallant knight whom none has ever seen sparing of his blood." He is the "old valiant master" who tears the young and beautiful Marchioness Mahaud from the claws of Ladislas and Sigismond even as the old burgrave is one day to defend the young Republic against those who try to strangle it.

At the time of the first legend the hermit of Hauteville House was not yet wearing a beard. Along that wild coast, among the moaning reefs, in the chaos of the rocks with their monstrous silhouettes, on the edge of the whirlpools where the captive billows roar with pain, a lion's profile was to be seen, the prey of the play of light and shadow. Never had there been a face so filled with genius, so inspired, in the sight of man. Nothing could equal this maw like that of a wild animal, these eyes, these visionary eyes, that pierced like a drill, this trembling lip, this wilful chin, this vast brow creased by suffering and pride and crowned by a wild mane. Here was the lion of Guernsey, the lion of Androcles:

> And man being a monster, O, lion, you became man.

The same heart in him which hated the mighty bowed the old lion tenderly over the humble. Never, until he spoke, had miserable men been permitted access to an epopee. Victor Hugo bent above them with tenderness, took them into his arms, and bore them off on the wings of the *Légende*. Already he had sung the *Toilers of the Sea*, those fishermen whose marine poetry exalts and colours their hard life. He sang the desperate endurance of man dragging his slave's chain through the centuries; the earth made serfdom by the gods and man

bent under the yoke of tyrants. But through all the vicissitudes, the tortures, the massacres; despite all the powers massed against man, the hour of liberation was at hand. Faith in progress dominates the *Légende*. The day when the *le plein ciel*, the full sky, shall have been conquered, the not distant day when the "aeroscaphagus" flies over mountains and plains, across oceans and frontiers, Jupiter will be forced to his knees, and Prometheus will have been avenged. Soon will come an end to hate and war. Tomorrow will see the United States of Europe; tomorrow will see the United States of the World, the supreme and magnificent ship in which humanity will be carried to union with divinity.

"Christmas Is the Children's Feast"

The "forty" and the "sixty," the prudish, middleclass aristocracy of Guernsey, were greatly scandalised by the presence of Juliette at Hauteville House. Madame Victor Hugo, matured by sorrow and exile, and appeased by the years, sought to treat the lone occupant of La Pallue and Hauteville-Féerie as a friend, and no longer as a rival. Had she not already sent her an inscribed copy of *Victor Hugo raconté?* In the course of one of the journeys to Paris made for the purpose of arranging for the publication of *les Misérables*, she showed how she could brave the judgment of the world. Dining with one of those irregular couples of whom Chateaubriand said they had only to "hold firm for illegitimacy to become legitimised," she wrote the next day with an indulgence in which a little detachment was mixed with a great deal of nobility: "I can conceive that there may be a barrier between regular and irregular households, because in general unmarried women come of a class that is somewhat unrestrained. I dislike masks, but I insist upon the veil. I am not concerned with, nor do I care to discuss, the reality; but I insist upon the appearance. Now, in appearance Madam A—— is as legitimate as possible. Her devotion and her love of her household legitimise her.

That which aggravates the situation for others (her double husband) interests me, for the poor woman suffers under an absurd law and is necessarily a concubine. Her virtues beat against the impossible. My ethics are not those of society. . . ."

At the end of this same year 1862 Juliette, who was most attentively kind to the occupants of Hauteville House, sent a cake on St. Adèle's day, and enclosed this note: "My heart is filled with infinite affection for all those you love. . . . Be gay and be happy. The reflection of your joy suffices to illuminate my soul."

In the dining room, before the great, porcelain-tiled fireplace over which reign the two H's of Hauteville House, Madame Hugo bent her smooth wide brow over the sheet of blue paper held out to her by the poet. Her long, idle fingers trembled slightly. Around her sat Charles, tender and vigorous; beside him François Victor, almost as languid and dreamy as his neighbour Adèle, the "Greek statue" grown undulant, frail, threatened by life. At the end of the table, in the armchair of the ancestors, sat a Victor Hugo different to him who had disembarked at St. Peter Port in 1855: he was now heavy of nose, black eyes staring with obsessive fixity, white hair, thick black moustache, and white beard. Madame Hugo thought of her son's praise of Juliette's tact, self-effacement, and melancholy dignity, all of which now began to touch her. . . .

Every day at the door of Hauteville House food was distributed to the miserable. Every week, on Tuesday, a dinner was served by Hugo and his family to fifteen, in the beginning, and finally to forty, children. On Christmas day, from off the beribboned and shining tree, each of the little guests received clothing and toys. On the twenty-second of December 1864, the lady of Hauteville House decided to invite the lady of Hauteville-Féerie to this feast of kindness; and she did it in the most moving fashion, by recalling the two children whom these two mothers have not ceased to mourn.

"We are celebrating Christmas to-day, Madame. Christ-

mas is the children's feast, and therefore it is ours. You would be very kind to attend this little ceremony, which is also the feast of your heart.

"I beg you to believe me, Madame, your faithful and affectionate

"Adèle Victor Hugo."

But Juliette was too well acquainted with the cant of Guernsey. She had suffered too much to permit others to suffer through her fault. The dream of her life—to sit before the hearth of the beloved great man—had now come true; but she found the courage to repulse it. Two beautiful souls struggled nobly. But what tears there were in these resigned lines:

"The feast, Madame, is given me by you. Your letter is a sweet and generous joy; it goes to my heart. You know my solitary habits, and you will forgive me if, to-day, I allow your letter to constitute all my happiness. This happiness is great enough. Permit me to remain in the shadow and to bless you all whilst you perform your deeds of kindness.

"With deep and tender devotion,

"J. Drouet."

A few months later, during a long absence of Madame Hugo, when Victor pressed Juliette to dine at Hauteville House, even though unbeknown to others, she drew back once more. "Permit me to decline the honour you do me, in the name of thirty years of discretion, reserve, and the respect I have always felt for your house." But at last, in January 1867, when after two years spent away from Guernsey, at Paris and with Charles who had meanwhile married and was living in Brussels, Madame Victor Hugo came home with failing eyesight and a broken heart, one of her first calls was made upon Madame Drouet. It was impossible not to return the call. Two days later Juliette rang the bell at Hauteville House, profoundly gratified by the sweetness of "a discreet and delicate rehabilitation."

Thereafter the beautiful Juliette, so bright of eye under her

fine white hair, in her wide pleated taffeta gowns, came almost every day to Hauteville House to collate with Madame Chenay, Madame Hugo's sister, the manuscript and copies of *les Misérables.*

"Hard and Sorrowful . . ."

Les Misérables was finished on Juliette's saint's day, the twenty-first of May, 1861.

"Your feast day; it is your feast day, coinciding with my deliverance from this book. Tomorrow I shall send off the last of the manuscript: tomorrow I shall be free. I emerge from *les Misérables.* It constitutes your bouquet. Oh, my sweet beloved angel, light comes to me from you; I feel my soul to be a ray from thine. You see how closely my destiny is entwined with your destiny. I undertake a task, and your feast day marks its flowering. You are for me a supreme and charming being. Night has fallen: until tomorrow! I love you; I think of you; I shall fall asleep in the light of you."

He had borne *les Misérables* within him since his twentieth year. As early as 1823, Victor Hugo had asked his friend Gaspard de Pons, who happened to be going through Toulon, for information about the transportation of convicts. In 1828, he took notes about Mgr. de Miollis, the Bishop of Digne, who was to become Mgr. Myriel as Jean Valjean was to be drawn from one Pierre Maurin, condemned in 1801 to five years in the galleys for stealing a loaf of bread. This same Pierre Maurin had been given lodging in the Bishop of Digne's "guest room" as in the novel. In 1832, Hugo sold to Renduel, the publisher, the "Bishop's Manuscript," and in 1845 the "Bishop's Manuscript" was called "Miseries" and the book was begun. Although his politics might have been successively Bourbon, Bonapartist, Orleanist, Consular, and then Republican, his heart had never ceased to beat for the humble, had never ceased to be evangelical and socialist.

The sight of *Jacques Bonhomme's* long passion had filled him with pity. In 1848, he neglected his manuscript only to become a tribune of the people, to "win for the disinherited the satisfactions of society, education, and well-being." In his speech on Misery, he roundly berates those who are content with the order of things, the "partisans of the golden mean," whose beautiful beatific calm is unperturbed by the spectacle of iniquity:

"You never raised a hand when the people suffered. You never stirred while beneath you a part of the nation despaired. You never lent a hand to give bread to those who worked in the strength of their years, or to those who, having laboured, had grown old and were now without shelter. Utopia! you cry. Nonsense. I am one of those who believe and declare that misery can be destroyed. Misery is a disease of the social body as leprosy is a disease of the human body. Misery can disappear as leprosy disappeared."

The misery which he suffered in his blonde youth, which forced to the scaffold Claude Gueux and the sad hero of the *Last Day of a Condemned Man*—this misery he now lived with daily, living the strange double existence which is the life of a writer. There was a storm of jeers in the Assembly when Victor Hugo cried out: "I should like to be the representative among you of the convict camps." We jeer no longer; we know who spoke that day: Jean Valjean, Monsieur Madeleine.

At the time of the *coup d'Etat* of December 1851 only the last part of *les Misères* remained to be written. On the isle of Jersey this book became *les Misérables:* the novel was transformed by the breath of the *Légende* into the epic of the humble.

Les Misérables: unforgettable figures sculptured for the future, more alive for us than many who live. Mgr. Myriel, that prelate of the Gospels whose works were like his words; Jean Valjean, kneaded in light and shadow, the son of Cain running from his crime, the kindly thief wearing like a cross the brand

of the galley-convict; Javert, the protector of order, the demon of duty, as pitiable as every triumphing ignoramus; Fantine, whom Victor had met in the rue Taitbout, on a night in January 1841, and torn from the clutches of the police, an abandoned mistress, a prostitute drowned in sorrow, whose corpse was flung into the public ditch, "her grave resembling her bed." And Cosette, her little one, called to the dying mother's bedside, tormented at Montfermeil by the Thénardier woman, whose life at the convent of Petit-Picpus was told Victor in one of Juliette's reminiscences of her stay among the ladies of Saint-Aure. ("Nothing prepares a girl for the passions like a convent.") Cosette, a blonde gleam, Cosette, a grown girl, Cosette and Marius—Marius being almost *Marie*, the middle name which Adèle's lover bore so proudly. Marius the son of Colonel de Pontmercy, living in poverty and humbly dressed, dreaming in the Luxembourg Gardens, exactly as the son of General Count Hugo had lived. The wedding night of Marius and Cosette, which was the night of the sixteenth and seventeenth of February 1833, when Juliette sank into Olympio's arms.

Thénardier, that jackal, that ghoul, his horrible woman, and their daughters Eponine and Azelma. Monsieur Gillenormand, the rich *bourgeois*, Marius's uncle as Monsieur Lenormand was Victor's. And Gavroche! The urchin of Paris, the heroic ragamuffin, the immortal creation chewing cartridges and spitting sarcasm, painted by Delacroix on the July barricades, singing the *Marseillaise* and beating time with his pistols, charging across the dead in double-quick time with his deep-bosomed comrade, Liberty.

Mgr. Bienvenu giving the silver candlesticks to the convict who had stolen them from him and thus consecrating him to good. The "tempest beneath a skull," that sublime crisis of the human conscience, constrained to decide between "the agony of his happiness and the agony of his virtue." Waterloo; the convent; the idyll in the rue Plumet; the elephant of the Bas-

tille; the epic in the rue Saint-Denis; the sewers, those intestines of Leviathan; the deliverance; death and love. These wild, tender, grandiose paintings went to the heart of a whole nation.

On the fifteenth of May 1862, when at six o'clock in the morning the Parisian mob invaded the rue de Seine and took by storm the Pagnerre bookshop in order to carry away the fifty thousand copies of the second and third parts of *les Misérables,* it was not only Paris, not only France, which "communed with Fantine and Jean Valjean, with Marius and Cosette; it was the entire universe which made Victor Hugo its citizen." From the porters' lodges to the royal chambers, the world was reading *les Misérables.* The next day, and thereafter for eternity, England, Germany, Italy, Spain, and America were to read with France this epic of the people born of genius. The glory of its author filled the continents. Letters reached him which bore only this address: *Victor Hugo, Ocean.*

And there, on his rock, this universal homage dizzied him, intoxicated him. His fortune had grown to over a million francs. A banquet in his honour was held in Brussels, and all France came to bow before the exile. But was he happy, this handsome, robust, stiff-haired, grey-bearded old man? He, the prophet whose Sinai was Guernsey, who demanded at Geneva the abolition of the death penalty, who fought for John Brown, who corresponded with Lincoln, with Juarez, with Garibaldi, who preached the conquest of freedom to the Italians, who pleaded in favour of Poland, who defended the Irish against England, who, at the Lausanne peace congress, presided over the first "United States of Europe," who was fêted in Holland and acclaimed throughout the world—was he happy?

No, the author of *les Misérables* was deep in dark despair. The beautiful, dreamy Adèle, the last of his daughters, had flown this rock from which Hugo's glory had taken its flight.

On the eighteenth of June 1863, she fled from Guernsey to join the man she loved, a British naval officer named Pinson. She had gone with him to Halifax, in Nova Scotia, and there, maddened by the most cowardly of desertions, had lost her reason in a sweet, musical, but incurable insanity. François-Victor crossed the ocean, found the poor stray, and brought her back home. Soon she had to be interned, and she lived almost to the age of ninety years, dying at Saint-Mandé in 1915, bearing to her grave a great secret of illusion and love.

Her mother never saw her again. The beautiful dark eyes, which had wept too much, closed before death had lowered, over their dimmed lights, the bruised lids. Unable to endure Hauteville House, which François-Victor had left following the death of his betrothed, Emilie de Putron, and which had caused the unhappiness of Adèle, Madame Hugo had gone to live with her son Charles at Brussels. In April 1868, Charles's first-born, the first Georges, died in infancy as little Léopold had died. Four months later, on the twentieth of August, the heart of her who had been the *Fiancée*, the tender, tried, and broken heart, stopped beating. Adèle Foucher died at the home of her son in the arms of her husband.

Victor Hugo had abandoned the manuscript of his *Homme qui rit* in order to take her for the last time in his arms; and now, seated beside his dead past, in the light of the funereal tapers, the old exile mused upon his touching heroine, the sweet blind girl who was the childhood friend of Gwynplaine, abandoned by the man she adored for a beauty doubtless more brilliant but less well loved.

Yet what a stir of glory sounded round his name! Can it be that happiness does not live with those whose renown we envy? No: we see him shake his head. Lend ear; listen to him. In his immense weariness he is murmuring:

> Yes, I should be content if a voice, far from these sounds
> Arose for me and spoke to the night. . . .
> I should be content, and nothing could be better

That such a prayer after such unhappiness,
My life having been hard and sorrowful, in sum.

Pan Is Not Dead

"This white-haired man sings his pleasures and his gallantries of yore. . . . He leads his muse to the laundresses. . . . He flings himself frenetically into the description of skirts, corsets, neckerchiefs, and frocks. He preaches libertinism. He endows all nature, the very trees and flowers, with lubricity."

Thus a tempest of invective greeted the *Chansons des rues et des bois*. The hermit of Guernsey was attacked because his old age was less chaste than his youth. At sixty, Hugo was a god, but he was a man. "Under the trailing cloak of Olympio we beheld the goat's hoof of the Satyr." What mouthfilling words. Nothing was ever healthier in body and desire than this youthful old man. Let but a Ruth fall at his feet, and he became a Boaz.

Such was beautiful Eva, so moved at serving Hugo's every meal that she let plates fall habitually to the floor. In order to save her china Madame Hugo had once again to put Eva out of the gates of paradise. Such, again, was Marie, at eighteen the widow of an insurgent of the Commune, whom Hugo met, cajoled, pampered, and consoled at Vianden in 1871. Summer was abroad in Luxembourg, with its heat, its freshness, and its verdure. The woods were shady, the stream murmured, and in the watered-silk of the pool, under a curtain of branches, floated a pretty, feminine body, checquered with shadow and sunlight. The air was reminiscent of naiads, hamadryads, odalisques, and those Sulamites at whom, as at a new spring of life, in the evening of their years, the prophets and patriarchs, and Solomon and Mahomet, would gaze. Mahomet was growing old:

At times he would have a woman stripped
And gaze at her, then contemplate the blue,
And say: "Beauty on earth, and sunlight in the sky."

Such was Blanche, by whom Juliette was later to be tortured, Blanche called *Alba* with her ripe beauty whose curved grace he drew magnificently and whom we are shown clothed and unclothed in *En Grèce.*

How was the bard of the *Sacre de la femme,* that hymn to womanhood, not to love passionately the splendour of the feminine body glowing with youth? He was old, you say: but no, he was not old, he was never old. Had he not himself confided this to Paul Stapfer and Marie: "*I know that I am immortal*"? Later, when he was nearly eighty years old and a doctor attempted to persuade him that, as Tircis had done, "it was high time to go into retreat," he answered: "Ah, doctor; what a pity that nature does not counsel us about these things."

What strength he had! His stomach, lungs, senses, and brain were all beyond the common measure. He was early abed, arose early, was at his work in the dawn. Afternoons he drew, wielding his gouge and jointer; and then, wearing a wide-brimmed soft hat, carrying never a stick nor an umbrella, a cloak thrown over his left shoulder if the sky was ugly, his hands in his pockets, shoulders hunched up, elbows at his ribs, stepping lightly on the toes of his boots which set off admirably the arch of his foot ("the man with the prince's leg," Stapfer had called him), walking for hours beside the wild surge, his skin salted, tanned by sea and sun, here was a man with a bulldog's appetite and a tiger's desires. At each meal Hugo devoured several platefuls of varied cold meats; and there were days when two chickens scarcely served to sate him. This was an excellent reason for his displeasure over the tax on chicken raising in the island levied by the Queen of England, Duchess of Normandy. The two chickens due annually from Hauteville House to Queen Victoria would have been so succulent to his wolf's tooth. In 1848 he was attacked but not laid low by an anthrax. This was too trifling a matter to make him change his diet. After a dessert of dried fruits sent from

Greece, and Hymettus honey, and only in order to drive away peccant irritations, he would ingurgitate a few charcoal tablets.

Despite so many reasons for sadness and mourning, despite his age and his exile, the poet of the *Chansons* loved life. He embraced it, bit into it greedily. The sap never sprang free in the burgeoning apple trees but this old oak trembled with the thrill of love, and all its knotty branches sang of voluptuousness:

> He is the ancient of the wood,
> Bearing the treasure of years;
> In his roots the days of yore,
> Tomorrow in his leaves.

Thus sang the poet of *Ivresse de Silène.*

Love! The youth of to-day can do without it; lads and girls have their minds on the golden calf:

> Silly hearts no longer live;
> Cheques are better things
> Than to wander, love, and grieve,
> Where the green grass springs.

At an age when most men buy love offered for sale, Hugo was proud to be loved for himself alone:

> Drink and laugh! But I still dream
> Dreams of ancient love;
> Feel within me the child soul
> Of Homer as I rove.

But the old faun was discreet. He knew that the mystery of love should remain hidden beneath the palpitating leaves:

> Here I stop our idyll sweet:
> I say that I shall not
> Go beyond this single kiss
> Our paradise to greet.

Chansons des rues et des bois, with their odours of the woods and of voluptuousness, their breath of summer and spring, their ardour, warmth, freshness, and eternal youth. Waiting to

hear the sound of their familiar god, beasts and things jubilate, radiate, blossom, and make love:

> The bird runs, the bulls roar,
> The leaves are entranced;
> The circles of the wind grow wide
> In the dawning of the light.

"With the Bones of Our Mother, France"

After the *Travailleurs de la mer*, that epic of the Channel islands and the sea-going folk who struggle without respite against reef and whirlpool, that hallucinating narrative redolent of sea-wrack, sea-weed, crab, and octopus, that call of the ocean heard by the lighthouse of Hauteville, Hugo delivered up to the greed of his readers *l'Homme qui rit*, a sublime snowstorm out of which burst an anguished roar of laughter, a profound sorrow, an infinite pity, and "streams of stars and tears. . . ."

Suddenly another storm broke over France: the man of the Second of December declared war upon Prussia. Bleeding France held out its arms, called for help. On the island of Guernsey, in the look-out of Hauteville House, an old man, aided by an old lady with fillets of white hair, packed his bag, overcome by an immense melancholy. An August sky was burning overhead. Once again the master of the look-out let his glance rest upon the flowering hydrangeas in his baked garden, upon the blue sea gently cradling the islets of Jethou, Herm, and Sark, upon all that so long had been his life. All at once the cry of his homeland in danger had torn him from his dream, from his prayer on the Acropolis, the admirable invocation in which his love of Guernsey and his love of Paris combined to bring his heart to his lips:

Victim of all the winds that come down from the Pole,
My isle lies in the middle of the sea; here Gaul
    Is made of oak and granite. . . .
But to-day, when on the breath of the unknown I am borne

Back to that Paris which battles at its gate,
Standing erect,
That Paris which stands and vibrates, but where none trembles, . . .
I feel that I must die upon its glorious ramparts.

"When liberty returns, I shall return." With what amorous haste Victor Hugo set about to keep his word. "A ticket to Paris," he demanded on the fifth of September 1870 in the railway station at Brussels. Jules Claretie, down from Sedan, was with him. Wearing his eternal soft hat, a leather bag slung at his side, he was pale, and for the first time in his life Victor Hugo was trembling. He looked at his watch, and said to Claretie: "I have waited nineteen years for this moment." At last the train moved out, carrying away Hugo, Claretie, Juliette, Charles Hugo and his wife, Antonin Proust, Georges and Jeanne. They reached the frontier at Landrecies and saw their first French soldier; then others, poor, harassed fellows escaped from the disaster at Sedan. The old man was in tears, but his high voice which had so often sung the glory of arms, rang out: "*Vive la France! Vive l'armée! Vive la patrie!* Then he broke down. "Oh, to see them like this! To see them beaten! The soldiers of my country!" At Tergnier they ate the bread and drank the wine of France. Victor Hugo communed with the body and the blood of France. "Madame," he said; "keep this bread for me forever." His proud countenance was hidden in his two hands as if the summer sunshine was blinding him. But no; Juliette was not mistaken: fresh tears dropped through his tense fingers. An immense emotion enwrapped this immense grief. "I want to go silently and alone into the besieged city," he had said. "I want to arrive at night, alone, as I left." He had only half his wish. They reached Paris at night, but not in silence. At nine thirty-five, Paul Meurice, Vacquerie, and François-Victor were waiting at the *Gare du Nord.* Just before he got down from the train the poet hearkened; this formidable rumble took him back to Guernsey, to the island where the billow sings and howls on

every side. Paris was there, the true Paris with its sublime convulsions, Paris which acclaims with all its tongues and crowns with all its hands; the Paris sensed by the child Hugo on the steps of the *Panthéon*, cheering Napoleon and the birth of the king of Rome; the Paris of uprisings, revolutions, voluntary enlistments, resistance, and triumph. Paris, the capital of Victory and of Genius. In the feverish light of the gas lamps, in the light of the moon, under the fireworks of the planets and the stars, Paris, besieged, clamoured to infinity its love: "Victor Hugo! Victor Hugo! Victor Hugo!"

Everywhere he was forced to speak: once from the balcony of a café; three times from his carriage; and each time in a cyclone of ovation. As for a sovereign—and was he not one?—cannon boomed in the distance, but against the invader. The voice of the cannon which had cradled his childhood now accompanied the voice of the old man. Between stanzas of the *Chant du Départ* and the *Marseillaise*, Paris, drunken with heroism, hearkened to the call of Tyrteus, while his banner-like words flapped in the night and flew. The bells of *Notre-Dame de Paris*, the bells of the *Châtiments*, the bells that cried to arms and were to ring out the call to vengeance even after the poet's death, sounded now:

"Everybody to the front, citizens! Let all the towns rise up. Let all the fields take fire! Tocsin! Tocsin! Cities, cities, cities! make forests of pikes, multiply your bayonets, harness your cannon, and you, village, take up your torch! Let every man, rich, poor, workman, clerk, ploughman, bring forth or pick up from the ground whatever resembles a weapon or a missile! Roll rocks, pile up paving stones, change furrows into trenches, fight with whatever you find under your hand, tear forth the stones from our sacred earth, stone the invaders with the bones of our mother, France!"

A thousand throats responded to this appeal by singing the song that is sung only on one's knees. And immediately after, everything, even the gun-fire, was silent. And then the anthem

of the volunteers of the Revolution brought back to the son of Brutus, and of Sophie of Châteaubriant, the crafty struggles of the Chouans and the savage guerilla warfare of Spain; and the kneeling crowd rose up as one sole man at the sound of the voice of brass: "Make war day and night! Let there be war in the mountains, war on the plains, war in the woods! Rise up! Rise up!"

"To the *Hôtel de Ville!*" clamoured the populace.

They sought to unharness his carriage and take him on their shoulders through the streets, but he struggled against them. He shook six thousand hands. At last, after two hours, he reached the avenue Frochot and then number 26, rue de Laval, where he was to stay with Paul Meurice.

There he was met by the mayor of the borough, a man of thirty years, thin, wiry, the high cheekbones of a Mongol, a dark moustache, Asiatic eyes, and the feline strength that caresses with claws. Another speech. The exhausted poet embraced the mayor.

"What is the name of this mayor?" he asked Meurice.

"Georges Clemenceau."

And thus, on the night of the fifth of September 1870, in the warning sound of the cannon, in the sight of Paris wild with enthusiasm and gallantry, Victor Hugo embraced Father Victory, *le Père la Victoire.*

Anticipation

The Terrible Year died in snow and blood. By giving a soul to the resistance, Victor Hugo had saved the honour of Paris and of France. The son of the defender of Thionville, the young ancient of sixty-eight years, in a red wool shirt and blue military blouse, mounted guard on the rampart.

"The poet should be hanged," wrote a Prussian newspaper, and its reply lay in the ringing bronze, worthy of casting, of the verses of the *Châtiments.* Marie Laurent, Agar, and Sarah

Bernhardt chanted them before the galvanised crowd. Into the German helmets with which they circulated through the packed mob copper coins were dropped side by side with those gold pieces which, oh, irony! bore the effigy of the man of December; but this epical alloy, this sacred union of the people's coppers, the Napoleonic gold, and the Hugolian bronze, was cast into cannon baptised *Châtiments* and *Victor Hugo*. This last of his children was blessed by the poet:

The struggle awaits us, O, my strange son,
Let us fuse with one another and make an exchange.
Thou, sovereign warrior and black avenger, put
Thy bronze into my heart, and take my soul into thy bronze.

Hugo was worried for his grandchildren, Charles's son Georges and his daughter Jeanne, the first but two years old and the second still a nursling; but his valiance remained throughout the siege of Paris and he never lost his good humour. "Yesterday I ate rat's meat," he notes serenely on the thirtieth of December. "After next week no more linen will be washed in Paris for want of coal."

It was Gavroche's turn to speak: all the mockery of the Paris streets gushed forth in quatrains which inspired in Hugo, their national guard, the food forced upon the besieged. When beautiful Judith Gautier, Madame Catulle Mendès, was unable to dine with the poet, he expressed his regrets as follows:

If you had but come, O beauty I admire,
You should have been served an unrivalled course.
For you I'd have killed and have cooked Pegasus,
And stripped off for you the wing of a horse.

When, in these days of famine, it occurred to someone that they might soon know the delights of cannibalism, Hugo threw off this will on the spot:

Not my ashes do I bequeath to France,
But my beefsteak, the morsel of a king.

And, lady, when you've eaten of me,
My tenderness you then will surely sing.

But heroism has its limits: Paris had to capitulate. Twenty days later, out of the forty-four representatives to the National Assembly elected in the *département* of the Seine, Hugo was second with 214,169 votes. He left for Bordeaux, where the Assembly was to meet.

It met on the first of March 1871, in a tragic session which consummated the mutilation of the country. The deputies from Alsace and Lorraine withdrew. One of them, a deputy from Strasbourg, was Léon Gambetta. Hugo too, himself of the marches of Lorraine, the eternal defender of eastern France against the Germanic invasion, refused to sanction by his vote the loss of Strasbourg and of Metz. He abandoned an Assembly which had not the courage to decree a general uprising and a war to the death that would have shaken from his perch the victor of a single day. Born of a military family, the son of the man who had defended and saved Thionville, the nephew of seven soldiers of whom five fell in the lines at Wissembourg defending Alsace and Lorraine, he tried in the beginning to accomplish by his words what his father had accomplished by the sword. Defeated, Hugo called upon the future to witness, before he left the speaker's platform: before that Parliament of the blind he painted the revenge of right. Never, never were words more prophetic. To-day, the two adversaries of 1870 and 1914 may hear them without blanching:

"Oh, the hour of our revenge will sound! We feel it coming. Already we hear our triumphant future march proudly in history. Already, from this day forth, France will have but a single thought—to meditate, to repose in the awful reverie of despair, gathering its strength; to rear its children, nourishing with holy anger these little ones who will grow great; to forge cannon and train citizens and create an army which will be a people; to call science to the help of war; to study the Prussian method as Rome studied the Punic method; to fortify

and strengthen itself; to regenerate and become again Great France, the France of 1792, the France of the idea and the sword. . . .

"Then of a sudden, formidable, France will arise, leap up, and take back Alsace and Lorraine.

"And is this all? No: hear me: France will seize Treves, Mayence, Cologne, Coblentz, the whole left bank of the Rhine."

Let there be no mistake. The great man was not calling upon the France of the future to wage a war of conquest. This soldier and soldier's son was not declaring war upon the German people. He asked of the avenging future only the fall of the Kaiser. This stubborn pilgrim of the old river where the blood of the two nations so often had flowed knew that it was there and only there that the peace of the world could be sealed. He was not mistaken about the sacred mission of France, and he spoke magnificently. Who would dare maintain that the future will not bear out the second part of this astounding prophecy?

"And France will be heard to cry: 'It is my turn. Germany, I am here. Am I thy enemy? No, I am thy sister. . . . I took all from thee, and I give all back to thee: upon one condition, that we now form but one people, but one family, but one republic! . . . I shall demolish my fortresses, and thou shalt demolish thine. My vengeance is—fraternity!'"

"Bravo! bravo!" cried voices in the Assembly.

"No more frontiers! The Rhine is thine and is mine. Let us be one republic, let us be the United States of Europe, let us be European freedom, let us be universal peace. And now, shake my hand. Thou didst deliver me of my emperor, and I deliver thee of thine!"

When he had ended, all those who demanded a war to death, who protested against a peace of violence, applauded the old prophet, applauded the generous words of France, long and loudly, so that the sound of their applause might reach the ears of us who are their children.

The Children of Thionville

Eighteenth of March 1871. Under the sun of revolution the barricades of the Commune are born. They make way. Behind a hearse a long procession was wending its way to Père-Lachaise. At the head rode Victor Hugo, bearing to the grave the body of his son Charles, who had died suddenly in Bordeaux. The national guard presented arms out of respect to the sorrow of glory. Insurgent Paris acclaimed Hugo; but the sorrowing father only passed through Paris. After Bordeaux, Brussels welcomed him again. Even from there, however, it was impossible not to follow with a torn heart the struggle between Paris and Versailles. He who, in his manifesto of 1848, had sworn to combat a republic which took as its banner the red flag, pulled down the Vendôme Column, abolished the Legion of Honour, filled prisons upon suspicion and emptied them by massacre, set the torch to civilisation, murdered liberty, denied God—for such a man it was impossible to come to terms with the Commune of 1871. But when the week of bloodshed came, the terrible, blind savagery of those of Versailles, his chivalrous soul embraced once more the cause of the vanquished. Was he not before all else the poet of pity? Had not Mgr. Myriel given asylum to Jean Valjean? "No more reprisals!" he had cried only lately to the Communards.

I should save Judas if I were Jesus Christ!

On the twenty-fifth of May, Monsieur d'Anethan, the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs, announced in the Belgian Chamber that the vanquished were not to be considered as political refugees. Belgium was closing its frontiers against them. Two days later, in the *Indépendance belge*, Victor Hugo replied. It was as if Ruy Gomez were speaking to Charles V.

"Asylum is an ancient right. It is the sacred right of the unhappy.

"In the middle ages the Church accorded it even to parricides.

"As for me, I declare as follows: I offer to the vanquished the asylum refused them by the Belgian government.

"Where? In Belgium.

"I offer asylum at Brussels.

"I offer asylum at 4, place des Barricades."

The next night Victor Hugo was awakened a little after midnight by the sound of his bell. The great old man went in his dressing-gown to the window, opened it, and asked: "Who is there?"

"Dombrowski."

It was possible that Dombrowski had not been shot, and had come in search of asylum. Hugo was about to go down and open the door when suddenly a great stone struck the wall of the house, close beside the window. He went back, and bent out over the sill. Some fifty men stood leaning against the iron gates of the square.

"You are a lot of cowards!"

As he shut the window a paving block broke the pane and rolled at his feet, covering him with splinters of glass. And the mob howled: "Death to Victor Hugo! Hang the brigand!" There was a hail of missiles, and an attempt to take the house by storm. Juliette, Madame Charles Hugo, and the nurse awoke in alarm. The two babies cried. The women screamed for help. Fortunately it was May and day dawned early. As soon as the darkness had gone, the assailants dispersed.

Three days later the Belgian government commanded "Victor Hugo, man of letters, aged sixty-nine years, born at Besançon, residing in Brussels, to leave the kingdom immediately, and to consider himself forbidden to return to it in the future."

The patriarch and his household were welcomed at Vianden, in the gentle and slightly lush verdure of Luxembourg, on the marches of Belgium and France. Charles's widow, her chil-

dren, and François-Victor went to live at the Hotel Koch, which was an inn rather than an hotel. Near by, Victor and Juliette lived in a curiously slate-tiled house beside a hump-backed bridge on the edge of a shining stream. Victor drew the house and bridge, and drew also the ruined castle which was framed by his window. In Vianden were two beings always seen together, sometimes one ahead of the other, and sometimes the other following behind: they were the curate and his goose.

From Vianden one day the great gipsy went off to make the acquaintance of Thionville which Léopold-Sigisbert had defended in 1814 and 1815. The town had been bombarded by the Prussians and lay in ruins.

"Oh, sir, I saw you when you were young," said Mademoiselle Durand, who had known General Hugo. The worthy old maid had mistaken Victor for Abel, and he did not trouble to disabuse her. She chattered with the volubility of that age at which one has still so much to say.

"He was so good, so kind, in 1814, that the town asked the emperor to send General Hugo back. And he came back. We received him in triumph. The day he arrived, he went to the theatre, and the whole house got up and cried: 'Long live General Hugo!' I was there." And the old lady, who was still majestic and beautiful, wept, while Victor Hugo's eyes too grew moist.

At the *Hôtel de Ville,* of which only the four walls remained, the mayor, Monsieur Arnould, declared that the portrait of the general had been burned in the conflagration. With tears in his voice Victor Hugo replied: "I am happy that it was so. My father should never have been taken prisoner by the Prussians; not even in effigy."

He sketched these four sacred walls over whose smoking ruins a sky blue with hope was spread. Near by was a garden, and in the garden children were playing. Suddenly a refrain arose like a challenge: the children of Thionville were singing the *Marseillaise.* And Victor murmured, "*They will make bad Prussians.*"

None the less, foreseeing once again the vengeance of justice, the old prophet threw out to the future this command which Georges and the son of Georges were one day to obey:

Let us teach our sons to dig trenches!

"You Remember . . ."

He had fled Paris, for it was now in the hands of the Versailles party, which was at heart as cruel as the Commune. Indeed, Paris had repulsed him. On two occasions the capital had voted against the apostle of amnesty. His splendid epic, the *Année Terrible*, appears not to have touched the feelings of the great city, now bled white.

François-Victor was pale, anemic. The air of the rue de La Rochefoucauld was bad for him. Little Georges and Jeanne had great need of sea air. Burdened by age and bodily pain, Juliette was begging to be taken back to Guernsey, her "dear, lost little Paradise." Hugo, stouter than ever, felt a world boiling within him: he was carrying his novel of the Revolution, *Quatre-vingt-treize*. Only on the island would he find the peace necessary to the accomplishment of his task. He made up his mind, and of his own will travelled again over the road to exile. On the way to Guernsey he touched at Jersey, and on the eighth of August, 1872, he was seized again by the intoxication of that island of wild coasts and elegiac fields. In the year which followed the look-out on Hauteville House gave birth to fresh masterpieces—the *Théâtre en liberté*, nine poems for the *Légende des siècles*, and *Quatre-vingt-treize*.

Quatre-vingt-treize, the Year '93: three little children lost in the flaming forest, in the battle of titans known as the *Chouannerie*, for whom Georges and Jeanne, seated so often on their *Papapa's* knee, served as models. The third was the first Georges, whom his grandfather had never forgotten. This novel was an echo of the familiar tales of Léopold-Sigisbert-Brutus and Sophie of Châteaubriant, he the handsome Repub-

lican captain, she the daring Amazon, the friend of the *Chouans*. In this story the *Chouans* are worthy of the Republicans. The Marquis de Lantenac is equal in valour to Gauvain, the chief of the "Blues," the Prince Charming wandered into the time of the Terror, to whom the great old man, in a beautiful gesture of gratitude, had given Juliette's family name.

And Juliette! How her heart beat as she recopied *Quatre-vingt-treize*. In it she revisited her native Fougères, Dol, Antrain, La Tourgue, all these witnesses to the *Chouannerie* which had seen Victor and Juliette in the days of their ecstatic love thirty-eight years before. In Paris she had despaired of growing old while the man she loved remained young. "I am so weary," she confessed, "that eternal rest will not rest me enough." But the return to her "dear Paradise" resuscitated her. She repeated blissfully the prayer taught her by Hugo many years before, and still murmured by him in the secret of his look-out.

"O Lord, do Thou so that we may live together forever. Hearken to me in him, and hearken to him in me. Let me not be without him one day of my life nor one instant of my eternity. Let me be forever, in this life as in the next, needful to my beloved, and beloved of him. Save us, transfigure us, unite us!"

The frailties of the great man she adored were so many anguished stations on the magnificent road of her passion. Her heart had remained young under the weight of the years. On the seventeenth of February 1873, at dawn, she thus celebrated the fortieth anniversary of their first kiss: "I responded a moment ago to every little sign from you of tenderness and love with the same ecstasy and the same ardour as forty years ago on the same date and at the same hour. You remember that I sent you kisses and that you turned round at every step to send them back to me? Forty years have passed since that first ecstasy, and yet it is as vivid and radiant in me to-day as in the first moment I felt it. The scene has changed, and I have donned the disguise of age, but my heart and my soul

have remained young, and they adore you as much as on the first day when I gave myself to you."

And in him too *their* old age inspired charming words: "For us to grow old is to rejuvenate; our hearts are reborn and begin again. *Under our white hair lives the love of spring-time.*" And he says elsewhere: "*Light knows no old age.*"

In the distance the bare woods sing and weep while an immense stir rises from the sea. High up in his crystal forge the indefatigable old god, drunken with incense but thirsting still for glory, interrupts a moment his immense labour to listen to the amorous voice of the past.

The Grandfather Seen by the Grandson

> What avails it thee, Priam, to have lived so long?
> Thou seest thy sons fall, thy country, thy gods!

François-Victor had been taken back gravely ill to Paris, and had died there. Of his five children, the old poet had only a daughter left now, and she was insane. Though forty years had passed, Juliette had once more left the passionately loved old man who never sufficiently spared her certain humiliating encounters. But a tender, pathetic, unhappy letter sufficed to bring her back to the rue de La Rochefoucauld. Ah, but Olympio knew how to bring her back; she was still very young under her "disguise" of age. "We seem like two who have escaped from Hell to Paradise. I was very mad, very cruel, very stupid, but I have my recompense. It is enough to make one go through it all again, if one could hope to resuscitate twice." It is she who writes thus.

After so many disasters, who was to give Priam strength to survive his sons and his daughters? His companions and faithful followers in the battles of romanticism? Who but his grandchildren, Georges and Jeanne? Our mother France, whose wounds had begun to heal, smiled tenderly upon the *Art d'être grand-père.* Nothing was so touching as this old man bent over these twittering birds. That gifted apologist of

Delacroix and Hugo, Paul de Saint-Victor, expressed a unanimous sentiment when he wrote: "Everything grows simultaneously, as in a forest, in the genius of Victor Hugo: the smiling hedge and the shady coppice, the hyssop and the cedar above it. You have had the clump of oaks; you have now the flowering bush."

The old man had given us the *Art of Being a Grandfather:* Georges was one day to give us the *Art of Being a Grandson.*

"Here was *Papapa* busily stirring his *mess*, a mixture of everything that had been served at table: eggs, meat, vegetables, sauces and fried food, all of these going into a sort of paste which he cut up, chopped fine with his knife, and seasoned by tipping the salt-cellar above it." Another time the "kind, smiling ogre" was refusing to storm against the laziness of Georges and Jeanne. When the little girl was put on a ration of dry bread he brought her not only jam, but bad marks as well: long-eared donkeys, fork-tailed devils, whips held in a vigorous fist. But when the children had been very good they found under their plates a whole collection of good marks: angels crowned with stars, dream birds singing on flowering branches. And their greatest recompense was to be taken to drive in a cab. "For us *Papapa* would give up his seat at the top of the stiff ladder of the omnibus. Madame Drouet would put on her prettiest frock and a beribboned bonnet, take her little sunshade with its chased mother-of-pearl handle; *Papapa* in his alpaca coat and Panama hat, would call to us to hurry so as not to miss the hours of sunshine, and the four of us would crowd into a cab. Jeanne and I would sit on the seat facing backwards, its sideboards carefully put up for us. Madame Drouet would settle herself in the silken folds of her skirt and tip her mushroom of a sunshade at the right angle. Grandfather would turn down the brim of his hat with a sweep of his thumb. And the handsome smiling old people, with the delighted pair of little children would go off on a tour of discovery through Paris. The street became a living story. And in the Bois de Boulogne, where the horse would slow down

to a walk, the cab would move into the cool green paths, and the blessed fairies and the shrilly laughing hobgoblins in the old man's stories would dance for us around the trees while the old lady, with half parted pale pink lips, would hum an ancient air."

On the twenty-sixth of February 1874, which was his seventy-second birthday, the grandfather sent to the "old lady" this charming love letter. "Is one born twice? Yes: the first time one is born to life; the second time to love. On the twenty-sixth of February 1802, I was born to life; on the sixteenth of February 1833, I was born to love. My mother bore me and you created me. The two dates fall within the same month: this mysterious conjuncture is the will of God. I suckled my mother, who was my wet nurse; I sipped your soul from your lips, and you were my nurse, too, for you filled me with ideal things. Be blessed, oh my beloved! I kiss your body and your soul. You are beauty; you are light. I adore you."

They had moved and were living at 21, rue de Clichy. On the twenty-eighth of April, the "old lady" came to live on the third floor of the same house, *Papapa* being on the fourth floor with his grandchildren and their mother. Juliette's heart "was filled with sad presentiments." Was not this story which separated Philemon and Baucis "like a broken bridge between two hearts"? But she pulled herself quickly together. It was in this house that the "pale face framed with fillets of white hair, the gentle face of a madonna of Luini painted in old age," who left behind her short steps "a perfume of verbena," who never wore any but wide, pleated silk gowns in the romantic fashion, Basque bodices, and one sole jewel, "a gold-set cameo bearing Madame Victor Hugo's portrait, which Adèle had bequeathed to her as she lay dying"—it was there that Juliette Drouet—Madame Drouet—became the mistress of the great dinners and receptions which began as weekly, became semi-weekly, and ended as daily events.

On the thirtieth of January 1876, Georges Clemenceau ob-

tained a seat in the Senate for the former peer of France, the ex-Viscount Hugo. The young Republic had henceforth its patriarch. The *Comédie Française* revived *Hernani*, with a beautiful and incomparable pair of lovers, Mounet-Sully as Hernani and Sarah Bernhardt as doña Sol, in the leading parts. Doña Sol thought often of Ruy Gomez. One day, as she was coming, slender and preoccupied, down the stairway in the rue de Clichy, a friend stopped her and asked: "Sarah! What is it? I've never seen you look like this." And doña Sol straightening up, answered: "I have just received the kiss of the poet."

In Juliette's salon in the rue de Clichy, Victor Hugo received. There one might have seen Gambetta, Camille Pelletan, Georges Clemenceau, Charles Floquet, Auguste Vacquerie, Paul Meurice; Alphonse Daudet and his blonde young wife, Jules Claretie, Juliette Adam, Stéphane Mallarmé, André Gill, Vièrge, Chifflart, Bonnat, Dalou, Falguière, Rodin, Sully-Prudhomme, Leconte de Lisle, José-Maria de Hérédia, François Coppée, Edmond de Goncourt, Léon Cladel, Henri Rochefort, Charles Monselet, Edmond About, the beautiful Judith Gautier and her handsome husband, Catulle Mendès, Tola Dorian, Paul Foucher, Ernest Renan, Flaubert, Gustave Rivet, Richard Lesclide, Maurice Barrès, Edmond Haraucourt, and many many more who only appeared later in the avenue d'Eylau where they were to be the guests of his very last days.

"My little fellow," said *Papapa* one day. "The Emperor of Brazil is coming to see me this evening. Would you like to see him?"

Georges and Jeanne did not need to be asked twice. An emperor! They could see him making a triumphal entry dressed in gold, surrounded by helmets, breastplates, and a retinue of plumed lords. And here was nothing but a tall man, all white, who came in alone and said to *Papapa* not without a bit of mischief: "I am a little shy." And by way of putting his Majesty at his ease, Victor Hugo said: "Sire, these are my grandchildren." Jeanne smiled; but Georges was greatly dis-

appointed. When at last he was able to escape, his old uncle, Léopold Hugo, Abel's son, whispered in his ear: "You know, in Portuguese this emperor's name is Pedro del Cantara, which is the same as Peter Piper in any other language." That night Georges had bad dreams.

THINGS SEEN: HIS OWN APOTHEOSIS

An immense outburst of gaiety filled the avenue d'Eylau, the *Arc de Triomphe*, and the Champs-Elysées. Under the grey February sky a miracle had taken place: the avenue was flower-decked, and the poet's house was buried in roses. "Flowers! We must have flowers," Paul Arène had cried to his friends from Provence; and Provence had hearkened to the cry of the author of *Jean-des-Figues*. For the celebration of the poet's eightieth birthday the whole way between Nice and Paris had been lined with wagons of palms, train-loads of flowers. France was in flower. Paris, too, had sent its flowers, all the flowers of its greenhouses, the children from its schools. Fifty thousand children marched at the head of a delirious populace of a half million men and women come to cry out their worship of their *Father*. Here was the caress of a whole nation of which this Jean Valjean of glory had dreamed.

Victor Hugo kissed the first little girl who fell into his arms. Georges and Jeanne kissed everybody. And thousands of bird voices arose towards this altar of genius:

Nous sommes les petits pinsons
Les fauvettes au vol espiègle
Qui viennent chanter des chansons
A l'aigle.
Nous sommes les petits enfants
Qui viennent, gais, vifs, heureux d'être,
Fêter de rires triomphants
L'ancêtre! [1]

[1] We are the little finches, the warblers in prankish flight, who come to sing our songs to the eagle. We are the little children who come, gay, sprightly, happy to be alive, to celebrate with triumphant laughter, the ancestor.

Despite the stinging cold the old poet appeared in his window. For two hours the children of Paris marched by in a storm of songs, refrains, and cheers. Gold-starred names were lettered on their naïve banners: *Gavroche, Cosette, the Art of Being a Grandfather.* At noon the municipality of Paris paid its homage. "I salute Paris," the old patriarch said in thanks; "I salute the immense City. I salute the sacred City!" Suddenly the chant of France replied to him. From the Arch of Triumph which Victor Hugo had so often celebrated, Rude's *Marseillaise* took flight. The *Marseillaise* guided the march of the people of Paris who, in default of flowers, offered to their god bouquets of verdure, boughs of evergreen, as if it were Eastertide. Beneath the window at which stood the poet and his grandchildren, this joyous crowd began to roll its sonorous wave. One cry arose, the cry of a million voices, the beat of a million hearts: "Long live Victor Hugo!"

As in those great hours of France when the country calls to arms, all classes were confounded here, amalgamated, burning with the same sacred flame: black coats, workmen's smocks, caps, hats, soldiers of every branch of service, veterans of the wars, old men, girls, mothers holding up their children to be seen and blessed by the nation's grandfather. Not a dry eye; men with taut, tense face holding back tears. And not only Paris was there: London, Vienna, Brussels, Budapest, Prague, all the capitals of thought were represented in that crowd. "A multitude of Delacroix in a landscape of Corot," someone said.

Suddenly a sob swelled the god's heart, tears poured from the lion's eyes and rolled down his snow-white beard. The startled crowd stood still. A faded banner was being dipped before the glorious son of General Hugo, an old banner embroidered with a sickle and a Phrygian cap. It bore words which brought back the past and predicted the future: *National Guard of Thionville, 1792.* And below, too, was an old man in tears. The police tried to drive him away, but he resisted. Victor Hugo was no longer at his window. "I don't

want to die without seeing him! I came to see him!" He was allowed then to step on to the pavement. No, he was not to die without seeing Victor Hugo. . . .

In the evening, when the human river had flowed away and the torrent of souls had been appeased, Victor Hugo kept Louis Blanc to dine. For a long, long time, seated beside his fireplace, the poet remained mute, contemplating the face of history. His glance was the fixed, thoughtful glance of a man who has witnessed his own apotheosis and has seen immortality move towards him.

As the Sun Sets

After the eleventh of May 1883, he ceased to live and merely survived himself. Following a half century of love and tenderness, after struggling heroically against a cruel and gnawing illness, which even so had not sufficed to prevent her from watching over her "great friend," Juliette passed away on that day. With her disappeared the joy of his youth, the admirable friend of his days of need, the confidante of his thought. A few years before, Baucis had still written to Philemon out of a youthful heart: "Dear beloved, if it were mine to say, I believe we should marry to-day, so full is my heart of the sweet memory of our past betrothals:

'It was a humble church, low roofed,
This church into which we went. . . .'

"Within me to-day I find all the emotions of that day, swelled by forty-six years of happiness and trial, of devotion and admiration. . . ."

Before closing her eyes forever, Juliette had had brought to her bed the dear letters of love in which her beloved had promised her eternity.

". . . And if you were dead I should love you still, and if I were dead I should love you yet. You dead, I should die. . . ."

"My heart is terrestrial life, and you have it; my soul is celestial life, and you shall have that. These are the two forms of love: on earth, thought, blood, and flesh; off the earth, thought, fire, and light. In the grave, which is the true life, our mouths shall exchange kisses of light. I ask God, I ask our two flown angels, I ask high eternal Providence and the mild and beloved providences living up above, to mete out every minute of our lives the one with the other: live as long as you may, leave when you may, this is my deepest and most burning prayer. You know that I believe in prayer. If an ant, at the moment when I was about to crush out its life, were to join its two miserable little paws in prayer to me, I should be kind to it. Why then should not God be kind to me? I supplicate Him to forgive me my faults, none of which has ever touched my heart, my conscience, or my soul. I supplicate Him to accord me your destiny, your eternity. To be forever, in this life and the next useful and loved, useful for good, loved by you—there is all my ambition. Love me as I love you. Oh, my sweet adored angel, let us end and begin thus all our years here below and all our centuries there above.

"I do not want you to go to bed without this word of love. I want to put my soul into it, and you to feel it. I want my heart to seem to you, all this night through, to be lying on yours.

"I ask to live, to die, and to live again with you in transfiguration and in light. I supplicate your angels to ask it, and I pray God to grant it. You are my life, and you will be my eternity. I love you. I say it deeply; sleep with the assurance of being loved. You are already my heaven here below; you will be even more my heaven there above. I kiss your beauty, I adore your heart. Bless you! . . .

"I write this to you on the last day of the year 1876, and you will read it on the first day of the year 1877. You are seventy years old, and I shall soon be seventy-five. Through this stormy, troubled life, through all the clouds and shadows, we have loved one another forty-four years with an unshakable

love. We are approaching heaven and become more and more souls. The heart of flesh is replaced in us by a mysterious heart of light. I confide our deep love to the wings of our angels. I adore you. Bless you, my beloved!

"Be my eternal companion. Let us fly away together: this is what I ask of God."

And this letter dated the twenty-first of May 1881, on Juliette's saint's day:

"My beloved, grave is this moment of life in which I turn towards grave, and yet sweet, thoughts. This is the hour in which the solemnity of life is made plain, and in which we feel more than ever the sovereign power of love. We have everything and we have nothing if we have not love. I love you, I love you as I did that first hour, nearly fifty years ago. I feel that for me as for you, everything is in this infinite word: I love you; and oh, my beloved, I love you more than ever. God knows it, God sees it; and it is because He knows and sees it that He has given this great love great life. I love you: for Him and for us this signifies eternity. Let us love one another. That means everything. Let us love one another, still and forever."

And this letter written on the eleventh of April, 1882:

"This is the most charming of anniversaries. I bring you a fresh flower, one only forty-nine years old: *I love you.* This novelty is pleasing to God, for He embellishes it with His eternity. Yes, I love you; you know I do; but even if you didn't, I am sure that you are, as I am, happy to repeat the eternal words of spring: I love you."

And here, finally, are his wishes for the New Year, 1883:

"When I say to you: Bless you! it is heaven.
When I say to you: Sleep well! it is earth.
When I say to you: I love you! it is me."

The great old man in mourning was merely surviving himself. In the drawing room in the avenue d'Eylau he continued to receive, with the help of his daughter-in-law, now Madame

Lockroy. Georges was never to forget the extreme and respectful courtesy of *Papapa* with women, with all women. "He always kissed their hands when greeting them, raising the glove a little and letting his lips touch their wrist. He would say, 'Madame,' with an air that I have never seen since, and all his manners were those of a sovereign gentleman. When he greeted a lady in order to take her in to dinner, he would say, 'Madame, will you do me the honour to take my arm?' and he would give her his left arm out of regard for the tradition which left the right arm free to draw the sword."

He was ageing, but "as the sun sets on a beautiful summer evening." Fascinated, his grandson sat and hearkened to his advice, his supreme counsel.

"Love. Seek love. Love makes a man better when he is good. Give joy and take it in loving, as much as you can. You must love, my son, love well. All your life."

The thought of death did not perturb him. In sight of the approaching darkness he believed more than ever in the immortality of the soul. He believed

> That all this unknown which environs is alive;
> That oblivion is not, and the Shade is a soul.

His grandchildren were at his feet. "My Jeanne," he said one day; "come here, and you, Georges, come too. My sweet angels, I am leaving you. I feel that God is calling me. I am going to see again my other little loves who are in heaven. You will not see me again, but I shall always be with you, near you, much nearer you than I am now. And I shall bless you as I bless you now."

Since Juliette's death he wrote no more, worked not at all. He could no longer have got into the omnibus whose steps he used to climb in such lively fashion. The top deck of the *Passy-Bourse* 'bus was never again to see him sitting lazily in the sun. His heart was touched. On the eighteenth of May he was laid low by pulmonary congestion:

> This was the battle of the day and the night.

The wounded old lion struggled, shook his mane, and roared in order to frighten death away. There was an hour of relief. He asked for the little ones: "My children, my beloved children." Georges and Jeanne came into the red-lined room and knelt beside the bed with its twisted columns. "Come nearer to me; nearer still." He kissed them "with a slow kiss and tears on his lips." The wide May sun came in through the open window. Their grandfather's voice had never been more tender. "Be happy. Think of me. Love me." His eyes smiled. "My darlings."

"And grandfather's last glance was his last kindness."

Alas, this was not yet the end. The desperate struggle went on, and such was the unsuspected vigour of the athlete that at times life seemed to have the better of it.

"How much trouble it is to die," he murmured to Meurice.

"But you are not dying."

"Oh, yes; this is death. And death will be very welcome."

On the twenty-second of May, St. Julia's day, the day on which for fifty years he had celebrated his dear Juliette, death finally took him. The last words he wrote spoke of love. "*To love is to act.*"

His last spoken words were addressed to his grand-daughter: "Good-bye, Jeanne." His supreme death rattle was like the sound of stones washed by the surge.

The Holy Trinity of Glory

"I should have wished Monsieur de Chateaubriand a royal burial," wrote Victor Hugo on the morrow on that great writer's funeral; "service at Notre-Dame, the peer's cloak, the uniform of Academician, the sword of the emigrated nobleman, the collar of his Order, the Golden Fleece, representatives of all the public bodies in attendance, half the garrison of Paris at attention, the drums muffled, a peal of cannon every five minutes; or else . . . the hearse of the poor."

On the second of August 1883 Victor Hugo made his choice. These were his final wishes as received by Auguste Vacquerie:

"I desire to give fifty thousand francs to the poor.

I desire to be borne to the cemetery in their hearse.

I refuse the prayers of all churches.

I believe in God."

He was not destined to be buried in a cemetery and dream "on the high hill." The Arch of Triumph was his *chapelle ardente*, and after he had lain there in state, Paris, France, all the world, bore his sublime ashes to the *Panthéon*.

The dawn of that Sunday, the thirty-first of May, was dazzling. Before the door of number 130, avenue d'Eylau, a hearse waited, the hearse of the poor. Upon its black drapery lay two palms. As far as the eye could see stretched carts of flowers, spread an ocean of flowers. There was a modest wreath of lilies of the valley which would have touched the heart of Cosette's father. A card pinned to it read: "The municipality of Montfermeil sends to Victor Hugo a wreath of lilies of the valley gathered in the woods which he sang." The procession —composed of the family and the twenty mayors of the boroughs of Paris—was about to start. "Jeanne! where is Jeanne?" She was found in tears in *Papapa's* empty chamber. Every morning for eight days she had been going, death despite, to kiss grandfather's hand; and now this last joy was to be taken from her. "Come, Jeanne. We must leave."

Under the sun of May *Papapa* was leaving his home forever. A burning prayer welled up in the pretty child's heart: "Papapa, speak to me again! Papapa, make me a sign!"

Already the black horses were moving off. Suddenly, a miracle! From the bare mortuary crêpe there fell to Jeanne's feet a silver star. Grandfather had answered. The little girl picked up the star; and this star never left her possession.

The era of prodigies had begun; the hour had come in which reality was more beautiful than legend. Under the triumphal arch Sergeant Hoff, the guardian of the monument, received "the guest of six hundred fifty-two generals of the Empire."

"Hats off! hats off!" The cry rolled, flapped, burst down the whole length of the avenue Hoche, the avenue Marceau, the avenue Kléber. Before the immense catafalque, guarded by battalions of school children—Gavroche and his rifle were there again—before the great bands of crêpe that veiled and gagged the *Marseillaise*, before the flame which glowed now for the first time beneath the arch, Paris uncovered. The public worship began.

At the close of day, in the violent wind of the night, a night of vertigo, a whole nation in delirium, "overwrought by glory and death," knelt under the chestnut trees and in the damp groves of the Champs-Elysees, to pray and to love. Who would dare paint this famous night, this long service for the dead, this "instant in which the corpse presented to the nation became god," after the words of the great witness, Maurice Barrès?

"The green flames of the gas jets covered with desolation the imperial arch and were reflected a hundred times over in the breastplates of the cuirassiers who, torch in hand, held back the crowd. The billows rose in immense surges from the far-away Place de la Concorde and beat against the frightened horses which stood within a couple of hundred yards of the catafalque. Delirious with admiration at having created a god, the worshippers were crushed at the foot of their idol. Twelve young men, poets and fanatics, had been accorded the honour of serving this corpse. Jean Aicard, Paul Arène, Victor d'Auriac, Emile Blémont, Georges Courteline, Rodolphe Darzens, Léon Dierx, Edmond Haraucourt, Jacques Madeleine, Tancrède Martel, Catulle Mendès, and Armand Silvestre stood watch in the terrible wind which brought to them Quasimodo, Hernani, Ruy Blas, the Burgraves, Mgr. Myriel, Fantine, dear Gavroche, and thousands of soughing verses, and words, above all words! For his title, his strength, was to be the master of French words."

Towards noon the next day, while the cannon thundered and the interminable procession was wending its way from the

arch to the *Panthéon*, Gavroche shared with the sparrows the branches of the chestnut trees in the Champs-Elysées. On the Place de la Concorde, all the statues of the French cities were hung with crêpe. At the command, "port arms!" the army saluted with all its swords and sabres and scintillating bayonets. When the hearse crossed the Seine the barges and lighters, black with people, raised their poles in salute, and the riverbanks were like "an immense shore on which each pebble is a human face." In the shining sky a flight of white pigeons preceded the triumphal march. The passage of the procession seemed as enduring as the glory of the god Hugo. When, at two o'clock, the hearse of the poor reached the *Panthéon*, there were numerous delegations which had not yet left the Place de l'Etoile. Behind the Cabinet, Parliament, the army, the academies, the universities, the schools, the municipalities, the workmen's guilds, the December exiles, what strange societies had come to celebrate the hero of the Republic, from the *Bell of Bercy* to the *Friends of Spiritualism!* "It is like a page out of *l'Homme qui rit*," cried Mary Duclaux, another witness. But no: it was one of those great hours out of the middle ages when the divine worship authorized every licence. The *Ever-blessed Jesters* followed Victor Hugo's coffin! As the author of the preface to *Cromwell* himself had written, buffoonery was confounded with tragedy, with heroism. Good taste was something genius could do without.

France was present, but also the universe, to glorify the apostle of the *Misérables*, "the great pardoner" as Henri Rochefort dubbed him. Russians, Englishmen, Luxembourgers, Belgians, Catalans, Portuguese, Brazilians, Serbs, Czechs, Austrians, Bulgars, Poles, Greeks, North and South Americans, all were there, and their presence attested the genius now deified on an exalted level with the greatest, with Goethe, Shakespeare, and Dante. Dante! The land of Dante had not forgotten the faithful friend of Garibaldi; and amongst the Italian delegates were representatives of the Neapolitan province which had once been governed by General Hugo and

had never forgotten the youngest of his sons—Avellino, with its meaty filberts.

Forever does Victor Hugo sleep in the *Panthéon.* His provisional tomb lies in dust, in the humidity of a cellar. One day, one day soon, we shall have another Return of the Ashes, the return of Victor Hugo's ashes to the light. Napoleon rests under the dome of the *Invalides:* Victor Hugo should be sleeping his last sleep under the dome of the *Panthéon.*

On the edge of the park of Saint-Point, near the grave of Lamartine, a little *poilu* of the Great War has won a bit of sacred earth. Beneath the Napoleonic arch, where the procession of Victory swept away the memories of the Terrible Year, on the very spot where during the great night of the *Elevation* France created a god, the stone which had supported Victor Hugo's catafalque covers the mortal remains of the most simple and most glorious of conquerors. Three immense and legendary figures which flame like beacons lighting up a century of history, seem to us to-day three links in a single chain: the Holy Trinity of Glory in the heaven of France—Napoleon, Victor Hugo, and the Unknown Soldier!

THE END

Date Due

Jun7 38

Ma 1448

AUG 16 52

9/15/52

DEC 8 53

JAN 4 54

JAN 16 56

MAY 9 1958

MAY 27 1958

MAY 9 1959

JAN 5 1960

FEB 25 '67

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FEB 1 9 1973

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